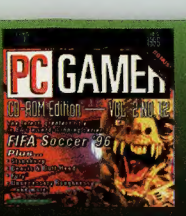
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Vol.2 No.12
December 1995

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PC GAMER
VOLUME 2 NUMBER 12 • DECEMBER 1995

Cover Story

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

101 **Holiday Extravaganza**

'Tis the season to be jolly, and what could make you more jolly than a great, big holiday gift guide from your friends at *PC Gamer*? Join us as we take a look at the hottest games of 1995; review some of the best in hardware, from joysticks to virtual reality; and examine the coolest multimedia CD-ROMs we could get our hands on. All this, plus twenty previews of the newest games for the holidays, should keep you busy until the new year!

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166 **Star Control 3**

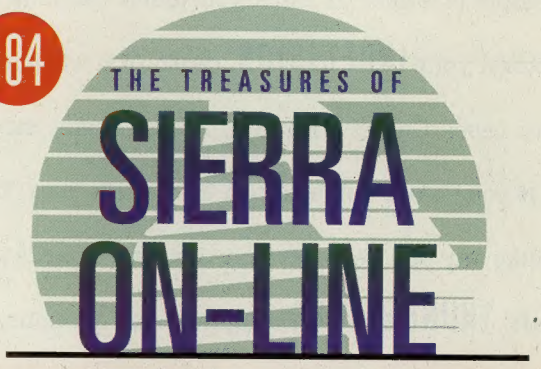
It's been several years in the making, but Accolade is finally bringing us the next chapter in the Star Control saga with *Star Control 3*. Will it be as big a hit as its predecessor? Find out as Tom McDonald goes behind the scenes of this long-awaited sequel.

Features

The Treasures of Sierra On-Line

It's the biggest, baddest PC gaming company in the world. But how did it get there, and where are they going? Steve Poole examines Sierra's recent history and gives us a tantalizing look at what they've got in the works for 1996.

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Scoops!

The future needn't be a thing to fear. Gaze into our crystal ball for a glimpse of things to come.

52 **Pax Imperia 2**

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65 **Nemesis**

Its subtitle says it's "A Wizardry Adventure." What else do computer roleplayers need to know?



73 **Wooden Ships and Iron Men**

After too long a dry spell, the age of buccaneers and broadsides returns to the PC with the first serious age-of-sail wargame in almost a decade.



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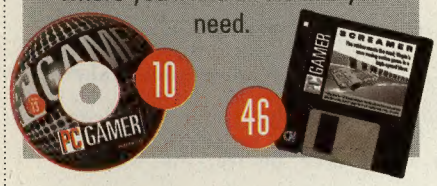
"We loved it. It was much better than *Cats*."

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311 **Strategy Central**
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319 **Letters**
When snow blankets the land and roving bands of carolers menace the neighborhoods, it's nice to hear from your friends.

328 **Next Issue**
Good grief! What will they think of next?

225 **Subscription Information**
Detailed information on how to get *PC Gamer* delivered straight to your happy home.



Greed is Good

Whoever said "It's better to give than receive" must've gotten a lot of underwear and ugly ties for the holidays. One thing's for certain; he didn't get a really good game or gadget for his PC, or he wouldn't be so confused about this whole giving-getting thing.

We called our Holiday Extravaganza a "gift guide," as if you were going to study it carefully and find the perfect present for each of those friends and relatives who love computer games. But *you're* the *PC Gamer* reader. We know when you check out our cover feature, you'll be doing the same thing we did when we wrote it — putting together a holiday wish list you can Xerox and give to all your loved ones.

You've been good all year; now's the time to ask for that new joystick.



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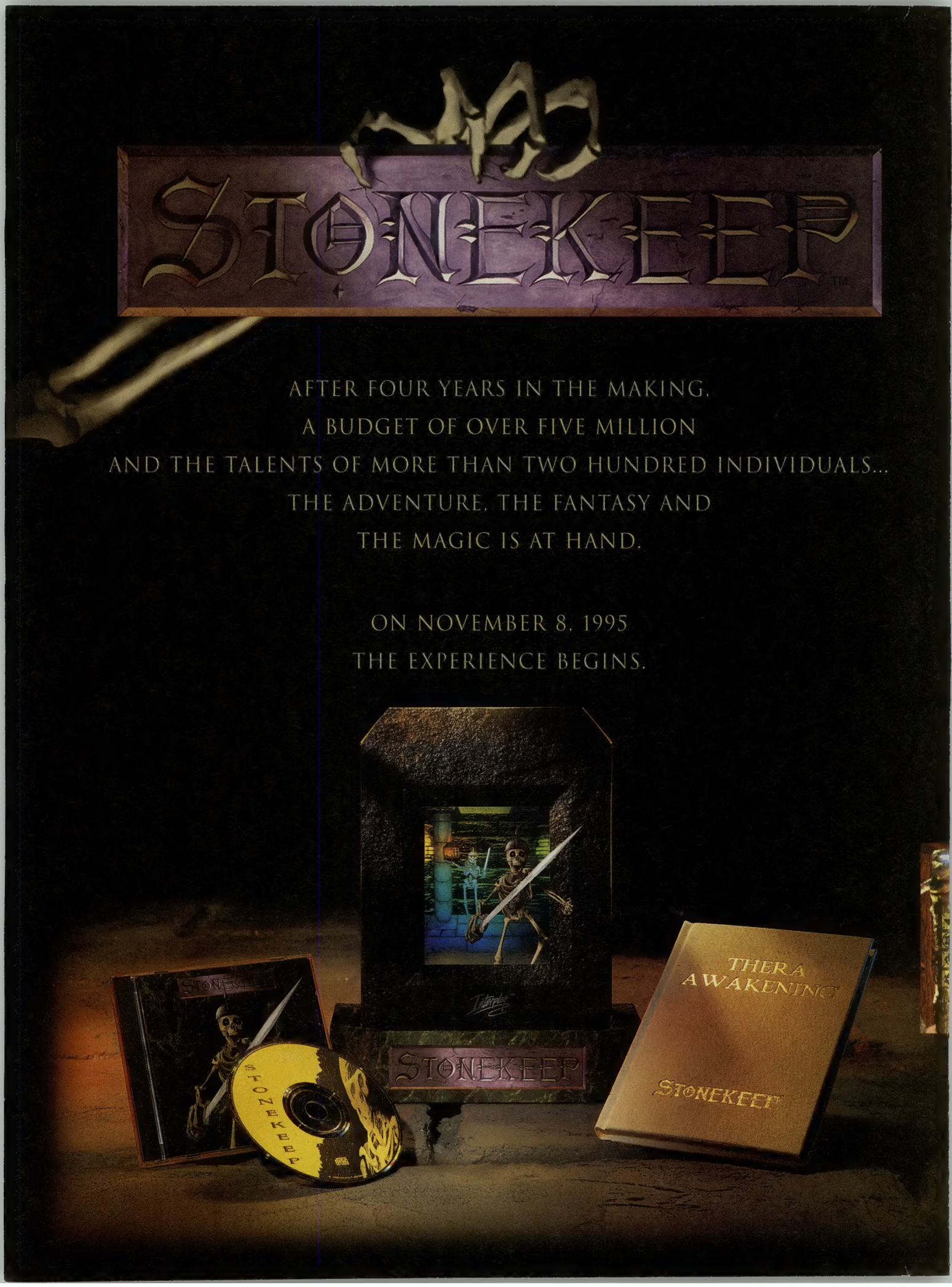
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YOU'RE THE MONSTER

PC-CD

(for an interactive demo) http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.html

Product Information Number 124


STONEKEEP
AFTER FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING,
A BUDGET OF OVER FIVE MILLION
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THE ADVENTURE, THE FANTASY AND
THE MAGIC IS AT HAND.
ON NOVEMBER 8, 1995
THE EXPERIENCE BEGINS.
STONEKEEP
THERA AWAKENING
STONEKEEP



Full-screen graphics let you feel the full intensity of your quest.

Step into the mystery of Stonekeep and begin a quest through dark corridors, treacherous sewers and subterranean realms of fairies, magic and the living dead. You'll discover a world where darkness reigns and where you become part of an in-depth storyline that unfolds at your command. Defeat evil, reclaim your immortal soul and experience the adventure that is Stonekeep.

It's an epic experience more powerful and realistic that anything you've imagined. Using innovative new technology, Stonekeep draws you into its dark reaches so completely you'll forget it's just a game. Your hands will wield weapons of metal and magic. You'll battle disembodied foes, rescue your allies from evil, liberate a massive dragon from bondage and discover an experience more realistic than anything you've ever imagined.



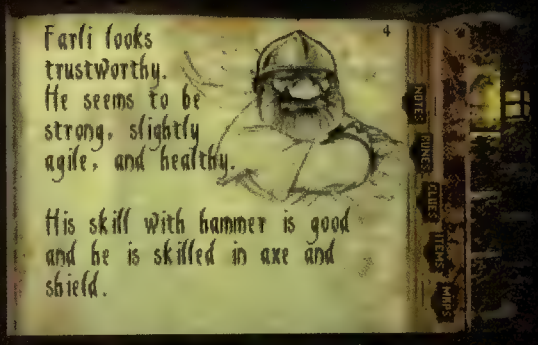


Hollywood special effects, heart-pounding music and 3-D effects will draw you into this epic adventure.

An epic production more than four years in the making, Stonekeep comes in a very special, limited-edition tombstone box with a hologram cover. It also includes the first chapter in the Stonekeep saga: *Thera Awakening*, a hard-bound novella, by Steve Jackson and David Pulver.

"By Gamers. For Gamers." is Interplay's slogan and Stonekeep is the kind of game we've always wanted to play. It looks fantastic, sounds great and tells a really good story. It's one of those games you'll stay up playing until three in the morning on a work night. Basically, it's just a whole lot of fun... and to us, that's what games are all about.





An intelligent journal keeps track of characters encountered and clues you've heard and automatically maps your travels.

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Product Information Number 151

THE CD

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

Handle this month's CD with care — it's nearly bursting with Gaming Goodness.™



We're always excited (*Beavis & Butt-Head*) when we can find the very finest (*Beavis & Butt-Head*) playable demos to put on the CD. So it seems especially fitting that we top off a great year of demo goodness (*Beavis & Butt-Head*) with one of the most surprisingly enjoyable adventures (*Beavis & Butt-Head*) to come our way all year.

Of course, we're referring to *Beavis & Butt-Head* by Viacom. That's not the only great game on this CD, though. *FIFA Soccer '96* by EA, *Fury³* by Microsoft and *Stonekeep* by Interplay are just a few of the many great demos we have in store.

And remember, those of you who still haven't joined the CD-ROM generation: This will be the last issue to offer a 3.5" diskette, even to subscribers. Sorry, but it's become pretty damn rare to find a quality demo that fits on a single diskette. As a fitting farewell to the floppy, though, we have *Screamer* by Virgin Interactive, an ass-kicking high-speed racing sim. Check it out on page 46.

Since we're always happy to extend the life of your existing favorites, we have a collection of bug patches, as well as extra *Doom II*, *Heretic*, and *Descent* levels. And to get you dialed in to even more gaming sources, we have the front-ends to both *America Online* and *PlayNet*.

These Disc Pages will help you get started on *The CD*, describe what the games are about, and provide requirements, hints, and other helpful info. So before you jump into a demo, give these pages a review. They're here to help you enjoy the games to their fullest.

Getting Started

The CD Requirements

Minimum Requirements: 386SX; SVGA (640x480x256 colors); VESA driver

We Recommend: 486DX2/33; Double-speed CD-ROM Drive; Mouse

These requirements are for loading *The CD* only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements — so be sure to read the info for each demo carefully! And for you techie types, please note that *The CD* will perform much faster with SmartDrive loaded.

Quick Start The CD

If you're familiar with DOS, configuring your system, and all those fun things that make PC gaming such an adventure, getting started couldn't be easier. But if you need a little help, here's what you need to do:

1. Insert *The CD*, and change to your CD-ROM drive by typing *D:*, where D is the name of your CD drive, and the *Enter* key at the DOS prompt. If you're in Windows, close out of it (ALT-F4) and exit to DOS.
2. Type *PCG*, and press Enter.
3. You're now in our point-and-click front end, where you can look through the text files and help screens for specific demo requirements. If you have any problems installing a game, proceed to the next column, "Manual Installation."

Manual Installation

In the event that our front end for *The CD* doesn't load or run properly on your system, you can still install each game, bypassing our front end all together.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located in the upper-left corner of the following page. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to *The CD*, then change to the appropriate directory by typing *CD\DIRECTORY*, where *DIRECTORY* is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the *Install Command*, then press *Enter*. For example, to install the *FIFA Soccer '96* demo:

- Type *CD\FIFADEMO* and press *Enter*.
- Type *FIFADEMO* and press *Enter*.

The game will then be installed on your PC.

***The CD* is manufactured by ASR. Before pressing, it is rigorously tested and certified virus-free.**

If Nothing Works...

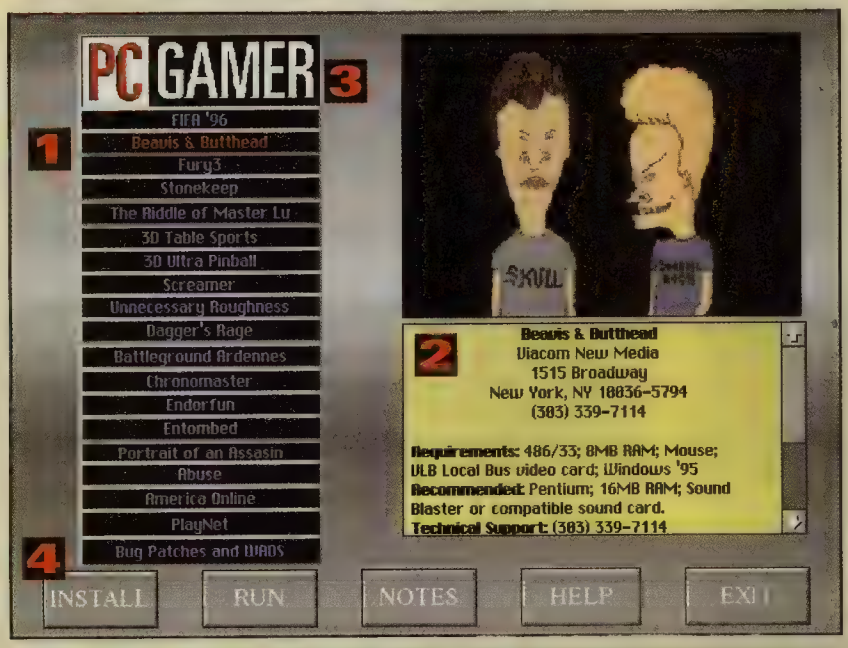
We cannot provide technical and customer support for problems you may encounter with the many different demos and patches on the *PC Gamer CD*. Should your copy fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address for replacement:

PC Gamer
The CD #13 Replacement
1350 Old Bayshore Highway
Suite 210
Burlingame, CA 94010

Please do this within the first two weeks after receiving the *PC Gamer CD*. If you're a subscriber, you don't need to mail us *The CD*, but if you purchased the magazine on the newsstand, please include it. Also, indicate any error message you receive.

Game	Directory	Installation Command
FIFA Soccer '96	\FIFADEMO	FIFADEMO.EXE
Beavis & Butt-Head *	\B&B	BBGAME.EXE
Fury³ *	\FURY3	SETUPX.EXE
		or FURYX.EXE
Stonekeep		INSTALL.EXE
The Riddle of Master Lu	\RIDDLE	INSTALL.EXE
3D Table Sports	\TABLE	INSTALL.EXE
Battleground Ardennes *	\BGA	SETUP.EXE
Screamer	\SCREAMER	SCREAMER.BAT
Endorfun *	\ENDORFUN	ENDORFUN.EXE
Chronomaster	\CHRONO\INSTALL	INSTCHRO.BAT
Abuse *	\ABUSE	INSTABUS.BAT
Josephine *	\JOSEPHIN	JOSEPHIN.EXE
Unnecessary Roughness	\UR96	INSTALL.EXE
3D Ultra Pinball *	\UPINBALL	SETUP.EXE
Dagger's Rage	\DAGGER	DEMO.EXE
Entombed *	\ENTOMBED	SETUP.EXE
America Online *	\AOL	FULLDIAG.EXE
PlayNet	\PLAYNET	DOOM1N2 & HERETIC
Descent WADS	\DESCENT	
Heretic WADS	\HERETIC	
Doom WADS	\DOOM	
Bug Patches	\PATCHES	

* = Must install through Windows. *Beavis & Butt-Head* and *Josephine: Portrait of an Assassin* require Windows '95.



How to use the Front End

1. Table of contents. Click on the program you wish to run — your selection will be highlighted.
2. Once a title is selected, this will give a brief description and system requirements for the program.
3. The *PCG* Logo. Click here to return to the welcome screen at any time.
4. The Icons — when highlighted, the following options are available:

INSTALL — Choose this to install the program to your hard drive, and to set up program options.

RUN — Click here to run the game from The CD.

NOTES — Select this icon for more information on each program.

HELP — This icon offers basic information about the user interface.

EXIT — Click on this one, and it's back to DOS City.

Free Demos!

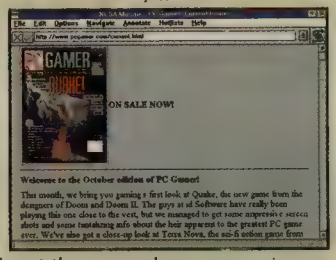
Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.95, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM or floppy disk for $3.95. If you purchase the edition without any disks, you can still get free game demos; all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in several different ways:

1. You can download demos and other cool stuff from our World Wide Web site at *http://www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet.
2. You can mail us the envelope that's bound in this issue. The order form on the envelope gives you many options:
 - Get a HD disk (*The Floppy*) mailed directly to you for just $2.95 shipping and handling.
 - Get a CD-ROM disc (*The CD*) mailed to you for just $5.95 shipping and handling.
 - Subscribe to *PC Gamer* with CD-ROM discs (*The CD*) for $47.95.

Note to our readers:
The Floppy (HD disk) will be discontinued as of our January '96 issue. Subscribers currently getting the Floppy Edition will be switch to the CD-ROM Edition.

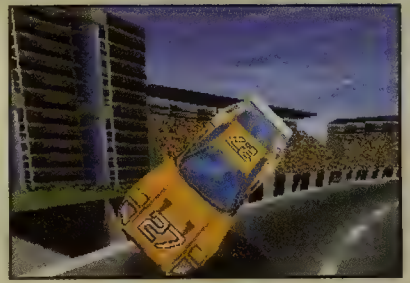
And the PC Gamer Web Site!

You can access our site at *http://www.pcgamer.com* either via an Internet account or through one of the major online services, such as America Online, GEnie, or Prodigy. Check out the game demos, our special Strategy Plus section, and more!



Screamer

Company: Virgin Interactive
Phone: (714) 833-1999
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Racing
Required: 486/66; 8MB RAM
Install: \SCREAMER\SCREAMER.BAT



For more info on *Screamer*, turn to page 46...

TWIN PEAKS





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VALUE: ★★★★★ *Electronic Entertainment*

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SIR-TECH

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Product Information Number 216

FIFA Soccer '96

Company: Electronic Arts
Phone: (415) 572-2787
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Soccer Sim
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 512K SVGA
Install: \FIFADEMO\FIFADEMO.EXE

Just when you were convinced that it couldn't get any better than *FIFA International Soccer*, a 1994 *PC Gamer* Award winner, along comes *FIFA Soccer '96*. Using their new virtual stadium technology, Electronic Arts has improved on an already great game. You can watch the game from just about anywhere in the stadium, and the views change to follow the action. The commentary is just as thrilling, and the gameplay is as smooth as ever with some fantastically modeled players.

This demo will let you pit your skills against either Brazil or Italy, but you can still scroll through the different teams to see what the full version has in store. You'll have one two-minute half to see just how good a player you are.

There are several camera views to choose from, as well as many gameplay options such as skill level, turning fouls on and off, and setting whether or not your players can be injured during gameplay. You can access these controls through the menus presented to you when you start a game.

We recommend using a gamepad for control. Use button one and a direction to pass, and button two to shoot at the goal. Keyboard controls consist of the directional and shift keys. Press and hold Alt and a direction to pass, and press the spacebar to shoot. Pressing Control or A will lob the ball up the field, and if the ball is in the air, the spacebar will make your player bicycle-kick or head the ball. Check out the README file in the \FIFADEMO directory on the CD-ROM for more information.

Select the different camera angles by hitting the Escape key during play, and use the menu to choose how you want to watch the action (see sidebar). Or you can use the function keys to cycle between the different views. We've found that the Tele angle gives you the most comprehensive view of the field.

We thought this game was so cool, we gave it an Editors' Choice Award. Check out our review of this hot title on page 207.



What would a soccer game be without free-throws from out-of-bounds kicks? If you're throwing in from the outside, you can select where you want to throw the ball, and who to pass to.

CHALLENGE

Even virtual soccer isn't an easy sport, as this demo will prove. In two minutes, we were able to score a mind-boggling *three goals* against the computer. But of course, we're professionals...



The player with the green circle around him is under your control. Dribbling the ball downfield is easy — it's the slide-tackles from the defense you need to watch for!

Scoring a View

The virtual stadium technology EA has incorporated to their sports titles give you several views of the action. Here, you can see the difference between attempting a goal using the Tele Camera (left) or the Ball Camera. You can select your camera through the options menu or the function keys.





Beavis & Butt-Head

Company: Viacom NewMedia
Phone: (303) 339-7114
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; VLB Video Card; Mouse; Windows 95
Install: \B&B\BBGAME.EXE

Yes, it's true. You no longer have to stay up late watching MTV to experience Beavis and Butt-Head at their finest; now they've come to you through the miracle of modern technology — and the grace of Viacom NewMedia. You'll lead the dynamically demented duo in their quest to become part of Todd's gang. And let's not be judgmental. Wouldn't we *all* like to be part of Todd's gang, deep down inside?

You control the two using the mouse. Right-click to bring up the cursor selection, and choose between walking, talking, looking, using, and inventory. Just hold the right mouse button down and place the cursor over your choice. You can access your inventory either by clicking the lunchbag icon, or by hitting the spacebar. For more detailed info on the easy to use interface, check out the online help.

Spend time looking around. Part of the charm of Beavis and Butt-Head is their astute observations of the obvious. Your first goal will be to get out of class so you can go meet Todd and try to join his gang. To do this, you'll need to get past the teacher, Miss Dickie (heh heh heh... Dickie).

A bonus in the full game is a collection of mini-games within the adventure proper. An example of this, Hock-A-Loogie, is included in the demo. When you manage to get Beavis and Butt-Head to the roof of the school, you'll be able to hock loogies over the side of the building at the principal, bicyclists, paper airplanes, and even a squirrel. Use the mouse to move your chosen character back and forth, and fire off your loogies with the left mouse button. The longer you hold the button down, the farther you'll spit. There's a gauge on the left of the screen that moves up to help you judge distances. When you've hit ten objects, you'll gain a Mega-Loogie — an impressive specimen of phlegm summoned from deep within Beavis or Butt-Head. Hocking one of those phlegm balls on Principal McVicker would be, like, heh heh heh, cool.

The demo ends before you get to leave the school grounds. Don't despair, however. There's plenty to find and laugh at in this entertaining demo. In the full version of the game, you can expect to explore Beavis and Butt-Head's hometown of Highland during their touching quest for acceptance.



Butt-Head gets ready to hock a mega-loogie at the principal. Not only is the view from up here nice, but it's a great place to launch salivary rain on pedestrians!

HINT

In order to get out of school, Beavis and Butt-Head will need to use what's in this gym. If you do things in the right order, Butt-Head will get onto the pommel horse, and from there, launch upwards to the ladder hanging down from the corner. From here, the pair can reach the roof, and the Hock-a-Loogie game.



The first thing you'll need to do is get Butt-Head on the pommel horse. You can do that by first using the springboard.



Now it's Beavis' turn. He simply doesn't have the natural grace and technique of Butt-head, but he means well.

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Product Information Number 92

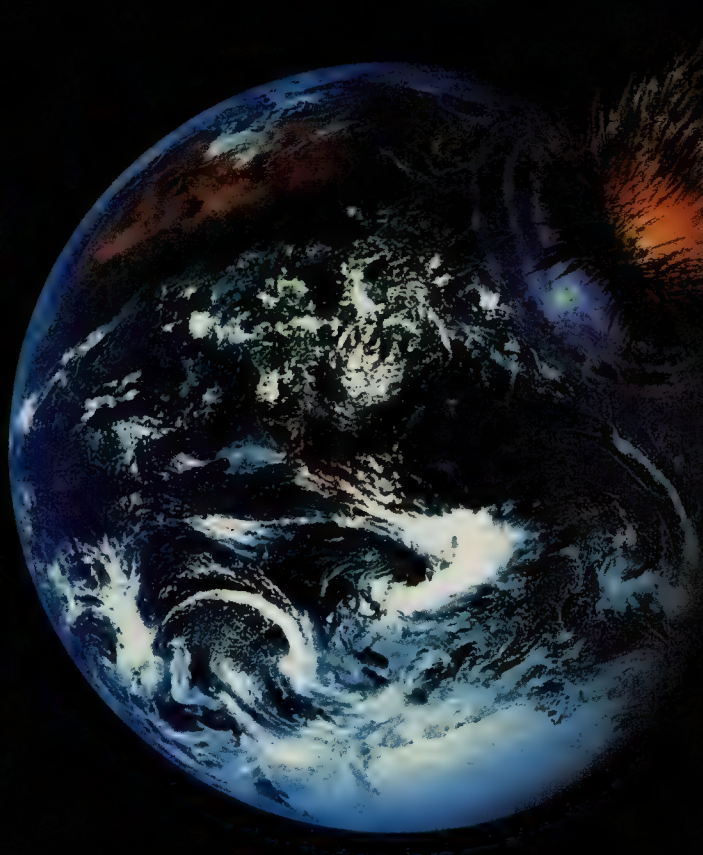
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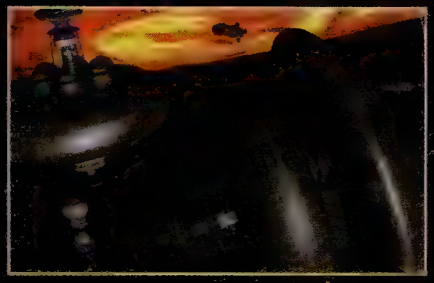


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Product Information Number 207



This old lady has something for you, if you can learn to communicate with her.

Ripley's Believe It or Not: The Riddle of Master Lu

Company: Sanctuary Woods
Phone: (415) 286-6110
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; SVGA
Install: RIDDLE\INSTALL.EXE

Sanctuary Woods introduces their first graphic adventure with *The Riddle of Master Lu*, starring the "incomparable, inimitable, illimitable, inestimable introducer of immeasurable, incalculable and incredible impossibilities," Robert Ripley.

It's 1936, and Robert Ripley, known for introducing the world to amazingly strange facts, discovers that someone has broken into his Odditorium, a museum dedicated to his bizarre finds. He traces the source of the break-in to China, a nation struggling through a war with Japan as well as a civil war between Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists. Ripley finds out that during the reign of Shihuang-di, the first Emperor of China, the Emperor's most trusted advisor — the eponymous Master Lu — devised a riddle to keep the Emperor's great seal safe in the Emperor's long lost tomb. It's said that anyone who can recover the seal will have great power over the people of China.

Ripley becomes obsessed with finding the seal — not only for its archeological value, but because it will create massive revenue for his Odditorium, which is nearly out of money. Your job is to lead the adventurer in solving the age-old riddle, recovering the seal and not only saving China from the clutches of evil men, but also helping provide the populace of America with strange and bizarre artifacts from around the world. And how can that be a bad thing?

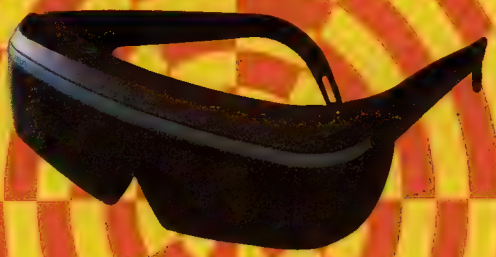
HINT

You'll notice that as you travel around the city of Peping, if you talk or give money to a certain beggar he'll follow you around. It gets difficult to work when he keeps yelling "Thief! Thief!" every time you try to pick anything up, so you need to find a way to get rid of him. He likes to collect metal for the blacksmith, so if you can get the helmet from the old lady feeding pigeons, you can distract him with that. Put the helmet on the awning of the blacksmith's shop, and then you can tend to your business without worrying about your head joining those in the basket in front of the Hall of Classics.

The demo contains a small portion of the massive game. You'll marvel at the tastefully digitized video and the ultra-realistic background art. With a script written by Lee Sheldon, an experienced screen-writer on such shows as "Charlie's Angels," "Quincy," and the third season of "Star Trek: The Next Generation," the storyline and dialogue are no slouches, either.

The demo opens after Ripley and his partner/bodyguard Mei Chen travel to Peping to find more information on the Emperor's seal. In order to receive the information, however, they must enter the Hall of Classics. It's your job to get him there. Good luck! For more on *Master Lu*, check out the review on page 244.

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Product Information Number 235

StoneKeep

Company: Interplay
Phone: (714) 553-6678
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Role Playing
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; VGA; Mouse
Install: \INSTALL.EXE

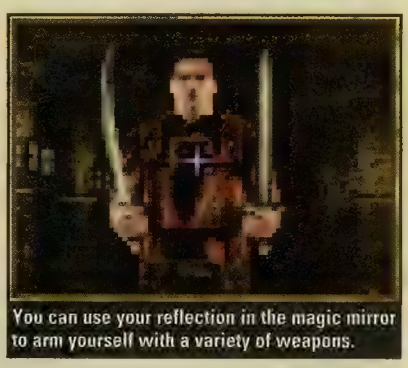
Ten years have passed, and you return to the place where a proud castle once stood. You remember the day the blackness came and stole the life from every being in the keep. You were protected and spirited away as the darkness closed in. The screams of the dying people echo in your ears as you remember the monstrous figure rising above the very walls of your old home, magick crackling from its finger tips. The keep sank into the depths of the earth, never to be seen again. Now you stand at the edge of a huge chasm. At the bottom of the pit lies your home, and you mourn its loss.

HINT

During your explorations, you'll discover a pouch located close to the beginning of the second level that will let you store your stones. If you hold the pouch with the stones in your hand, clicking with the corresponding mouse button will throw the stones until the pouch is empty. This can be very handy for long-range attacks. Also, if you open a door and see a monster straight ahead of you on the other side, you can throw the stones to kill it without a battle, since it won't come after you.

Suddenly, a light emerges from the darkness, and tells you of a way to restore what once was. Shedding your mortal shell, you descend into the pit, seeking the destruction of the one who took all you knew.

So begins *StoneKeep*, an involving first-person computer roleplaying game from Interplay. You'll wander mazes, meet allies, and battle all kinds of fierce monsters. You'll discover the power of magick and the strength of steel as you make your way through a twenty-two level labyrinth on the way toward a final confrontation with Khull-Khuum, the Shadowking. Not only will you need to fight for your very survival, but you'll have to discover artifacts and solve a multitude of puzzles to reclaim your birthright.



You can use your reflection in the magic mirror to arm yourself with a variety of weapons.

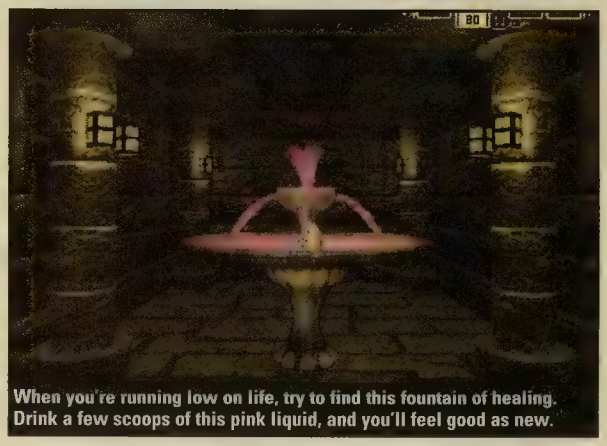


These goblins, some of the tougher second-level opponents in *StoneKeep*, like to gang up on you. The best way to defeat them is to simply concentrate on them one at a time.

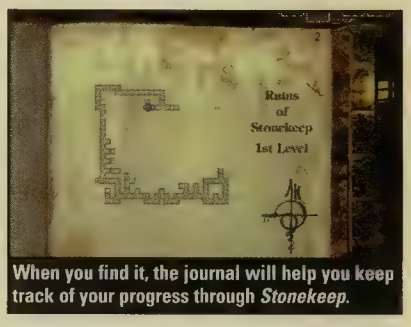
You move through the keep using the arrow keys for direction. The rest of the interface is all mouse-controlled; the left mouse button controls your character's left hand, and the right button the right hand. So when fighting, clicking the left button will punch with the left hand, or use the weapon in that hand.

To access your inventory, move the cursor to the middle right of the screen; a scroll icon will appear. Clicking on this will open your inventory scroll, as well as show the mirror where you can access the things you're wearing and the weapons you're holding. Once you find the journal, you can access it by clicking the upper-left corner of the screen. The journal will let you identify objects you've discovered, automap areas you've explored, keep track of any clues you come across, and allow you to make notes of your experiences.

In the main playing window, the mouse controls several actions. When the cursor is a cross, clicking a mouse button will either punch or strike with the weapon in your hand. Most creatures have a weak spot, and they'll suffer more damage when you stike them there. Since your blows fall on the spot your cursor covers, you can aim for these tender areas during battle. (Hint: On goblins, the tender area is around their neck.) You can also sift through debris on the floor with this technique, finding all manner of useful items in what may seem like piles of garbage. When the cursor is a grabbing hand, a left click will pick up the item and you can place it in inventory or one of your hands; a right click will put it directly in your inventory. The cursor will also become a pointing finger to push a button, or a pulling hand to operate a lever.



When you're running low on life, try to find this fountain of healing. Drink a few scoops of this pink liquid, and you'll feel good as new.



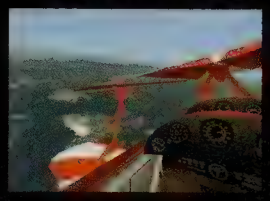
When you find it, the journal will help you keep track of your progress through *Stonekeep*.

This demo allows you to explore the first two levels of the game. With its seamless interface that takes only seconds to master, and an involving storyline full of puzzles and clues that make the experience more than just a maze-mapping exercise, *StoneKeep* has the potential to become one of the most engrossing and entertaining RPGs we've seen in quite a while.

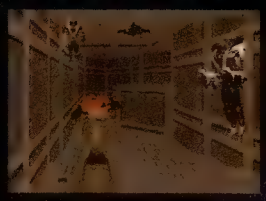

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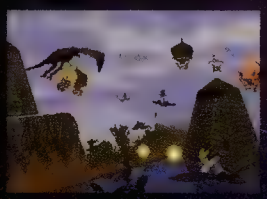
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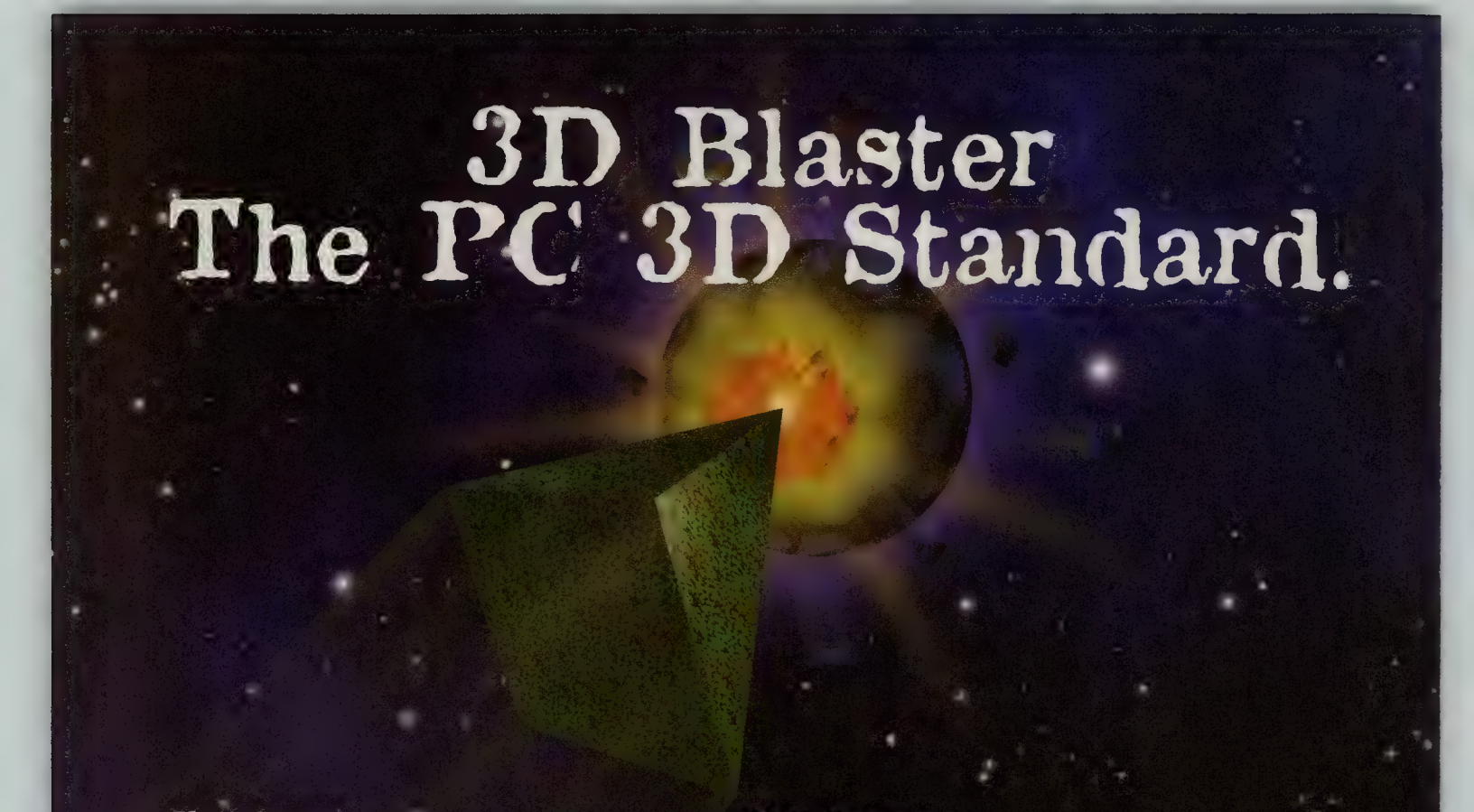


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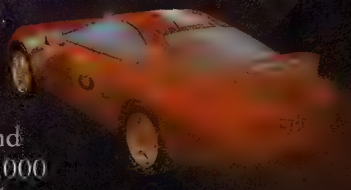
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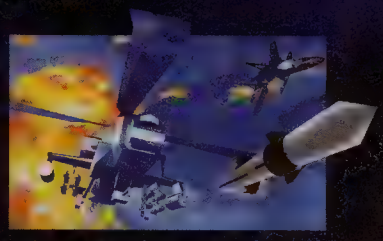
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Product Information Number 118

Abuse

Company: Crack dot Com
Phone: (800) 810-0022
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade Platform Shooter
Required: 386SX; 4MB RAM; VGA; Mouse; 6.5 MB hard-drive space
Install: \ABUSE\SETUP.EXE



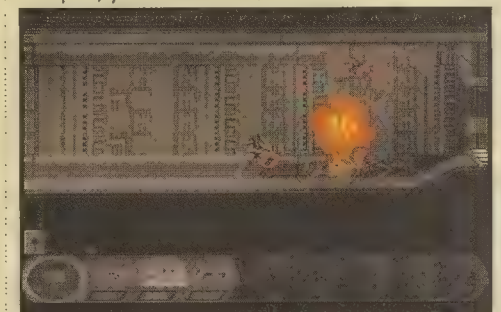
Sometimes things happen so quickly, you never know when the floor will blow out from underneath you.

There's not a whole lot of story behind the game *Abuse*. But with stunning graphics, smooth play control, and lots of nasty monsters to kill, this looks like one of the best platform shooters we've seen since *Blackthorne*. And with a foundation like that, who needs story?

Your goal, basically, is to kill everything in sight and get out alive. You move your character with the arrow keys, using the mouse to aim your weapon by placing the cross-hairs where you want to shoot, and pressing the left mouse button to let the lead fly.

In the tradition of great shareware gaming, there are five levels here for you to try out. The first is a sort of "training" level, and the others will pit you against leaping aliens and deadly machines. Five levels may not seem like much, but you'll find secrets and hidden passages that'll keep you busy for a good, long time.

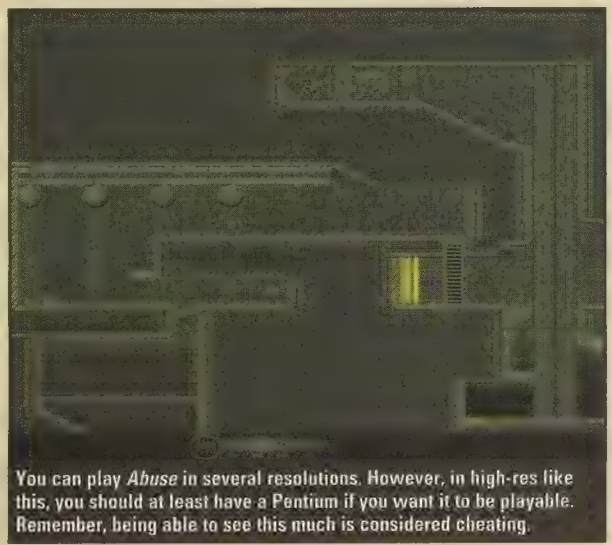
When you gather more than one weapon, you can switch between them by putting the cursor over the desired arsenal on the bottom of the screen and pressing the right mouse button. Or you can cycle through them with the Control and Insert keys.



What would an action game be without some great looking explosions of the enemy? Even at low resolution, this game looks great.

In order to save your game, you have to locate a save game console. There are many of them scattered through the levels, and almost always one at the beginning of a level. You can then load them by clicking on the floppy disc icon at the main menu.

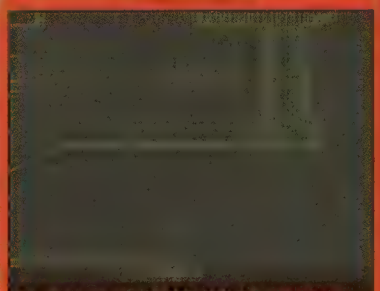
You can play this demo in several resolutions, from the default 320x200 to 1280x1024, depending on the capabilities of your monitor — although you better have a Pentium if you want to play at the higher resolutions. It's suggested that you first play in 320x200 to finish the game, though, because you'll be able to see things that will give the secrets away in anything over low resolution. You can change the resolution by typing "abuse -size ?" for your options, or, if you know your monitor is capable of it, the resolution you want to play in. I.e., if you wanted to play in 640x480, you would type "abuse -size 640 480."



You can play *Abuse* in several resolutions. However, in high-res like this, you should at least have a Pentium if you want it to be playable. Remember, being able to see this much is considered cheating.

Knowing the success of id with the customizable levels of *Doom*, *Doom II*, and *Heretic*, Crack dot Com went a bit further with *Abuse*. Where you needed to have the registered version of *Doom* in order to play the modified levels, you don't have that restriction with the shareware version of *Abuse*. Also, they have included a LISP interpreter. In other words, you can use the level editing capabilities in *Abuse* to change the laws of physics, lighting, and rules of *Abuse*. Not only that, but if you use it correctly, you could create a whole new game that can be ported to any platform. You can access the editor by typing "abuse -edit" at the command prompt. It is menu driven, but you should check out the ABUSE.DOC file that is installed on your hard drive for instructions on how to use it.

HINT



As you can see, in 800x600 the secret passage described below is quite obvious.

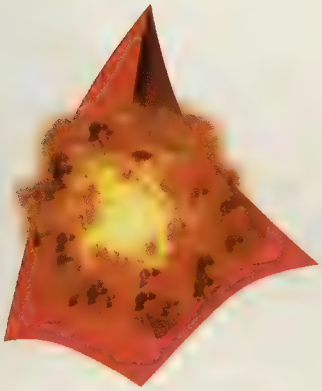
There are tons of secret doors, passages, and rooms in this shareware version of *Abuse*. One of them will warp you to any level you want from level zero. After you use the first transporter, you'll fall down a shaft. Next to the save game console, you can see the roughened edges of the ceiling. If you shoot the ceiling, you'll see it blow apart revealing a passage up. Jump over the round spot — it's a spring — and you'll be launched into the upper passageway. Run to the left and through the door, and you'll be in a room with four transporters. From left to right they will take you to the beginning of levels one through four.



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Product Information Number 135

Entombed

Company: Impulse
Phone: (800) 6-IMPULSE
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle
Required: 386; 2MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: ENTOMBED\SETUP.EXE

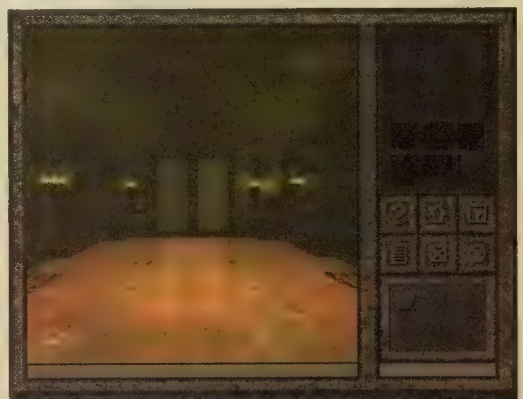
Enter a world where your wits are the only thing to save you from an untimely death. In *Entombed*, you must pit yourself against the deviousness of an ancient people as you seek to discover their fate — and protect your own life in the bargain.

You play an archeologist who, while conducting a dig in a remote part of Tarsus, fell into a dark cavern when a portion of the ground he stood on collapsed. He discovered a musty book, and when he opened it, he learned that it was the journal of a Dr. Henry Who, a fellow archeologist who disappeared several years ago.

You find out that the cavern he is in dates back to ancient Egyptian times, and the people who created it were a very secretive and paranoid race. The underground realm you are about to explore contains an abundance of traps and puzzles, and you must solve each one in order to survive. Fortunately, Dr. Who has provided you with his notes and clues about the puzzles. Although they won't give you the answer directly, his notes will help keep you alive for some time.

This demo will take you through level one of this puzzling world, and you'll be challenged with tasks ranging from turning on the lights to bypassing floor traps. It won't be easy, so make sure you use the journal you found as much as possible.

With some stunning graphics and challenging puzzle-play along the lines of *Myst* or *Jewels of the Oracle*, *Entombed* is sure to push your puzzle-solving prowess to its limits.



Before you can open this door, you have to solve the Sun Puzzle and the Star Puzzle. Once those are completed, only one puzzle stands between you and the next level.

HINT

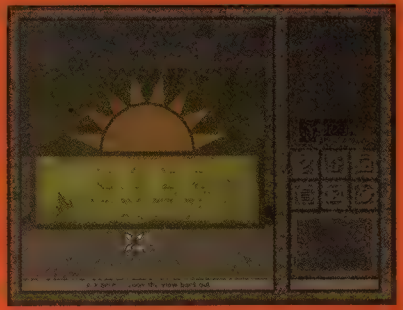


While looking at the acid moat, click on the symbol directly to the right of the stairs.

In order to escape the first room in the game, you have to solve the Morning Puzzle. After you figure out how to turn on the lights, look at the puzzle on the wall to your left. Before you can do anything, you must first press one of the panels below the acid moat behind you. If you press the correct one, you'll see a quarter of a sun symbol in the lower left corner of the puzzle. If you click on a tile next to the empty space, that tile will move into the space. By moving pieces through the space next to the quarter sun symbol, you can change the design on the tile to a sun, moon, or bar. In order to open the door to the next chamber, change all the moons in the upper half of the design to suns. Then you can continue your quest for freedom.



With the corner sun symbol in the lower left of the puzzle, you can move the tiles next to it to change the patterns.



Once you've changed the moons to suns, rays will appear around the setting sun symbol, and the door to the next chamber will open.

"SHE'S PERFECT.
SHE'S GOT AN ATHLETIC BUILD
LOVELY LONG NAILS
EXOTIC EYES
NIMBLE REFLEXES AND..."

Product Information Number 145

Chronomaster

Company: Capstone
Phone: (800) 468-7226
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 3MB Hard Drive Space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \CHRONO\SETUP.EXE

Within Universe Prime, there are several smaller universes, created by highly intelligent men and women for huge amounts of money. Within these "Pocket Universes," the creator can manipulate anything he or she desires — even the laws of physics. Anything is possible within the pocket universe, even magic.

Someone is shutting them down, though, putting the inhabitants at risk in time stasis. Although officially the Terran government of Universe Prime does not meddle in the affairs of the Pocket Universes (their laws being solely the responsibility of the owner) they have approached you, a retired expert, to investigate the mysterious shut-downs — occurrences that should, by all rights, be impossible for anyone but the creator to accomplish. You accept, more for professional curiosity than the huge sum you will be paid if you are successful.



As your ship, the Jackal, lands on the pad at the City of Ground Zero, you can see the fantastic graphics that *Chronomaster* has to offer.

In this demo of Capstone's visually stunning new graphic adventure, you explore Urbs, one of the two pocket universes afflicted with stasis. In order to operate within a universe where time now stands still, you must carry "bottled time" with you, a small personal force field where time operates normally.

After the demo starts, you'll be inside of your ship. Using the mouse, you can look either left or right. Looking to the right will put you in front of the ship's computer, where you can look up personnel files on everyone you know, read your personal journal, or look up objects in the encyclopedia. It's a good idea to start here, since there is some very useful information contained in the ship's database.

If you look to your left, you'll find the universe selector. It will be set for Urbs. You'll see a set of four small boxes to the upper right. Click on the upper-left box and you'll be presented with three landing sites. Feel free to land anywhere you like, but in order to set up the equipment, you'll need to use to find the World Key, you'll eventually have to get to magnetic north.

Once you start wandering around Urbs, the interface becomes simple point-and-click. Pressing the right mouse button will cycle through the various actions you can perform. If you click on the small bar at the top of the screen, you'll be able to access an expanded menu of actions as well as your inventory and tools. To use an object, simply click on it in your inventory, then click on the object you wish to perform an action on.

HINT

When you first get to the Sculpture Garden, there is a large statue standing on magnetic north. There are two ways to make him move so you can set up the resonator. The forceful way of doing it is by going to Fort, where you can manipulate a very large gun, and by putting bottled time in a missile, vaporize the unmoving hero. Or, you can trick him by placing an enemy flag, also found at Fort, on the flag pole behind the statue.

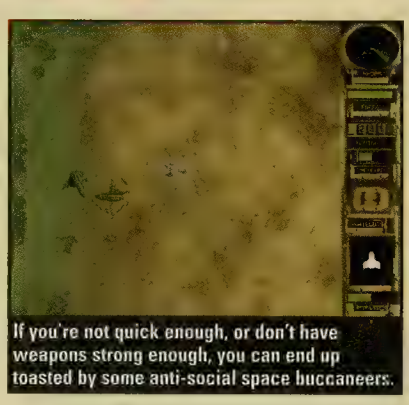
Dagger's Rage

Company: Microforum
Phone: (800) 465-2323
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade Action
Required: 486/50; 8MB RAM; Local Bus SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \DAGGER\DEMO.EXE

If you're into titles like *Raptor* or *Tyrian* but would like to see some more depth, you've come to the right place. Enter *Dagger's Rage*, a game that not only lets you experience the thrill of air-to-air combat, but does so in a large arena that demands as much thought as fast reflexes.

You play Dagger, a pilot for the Mercy Corps — an organization sworn to protect law abiding citizens from pirates that attack at first sight. You can buy weapons, new ships, and earn credits by flying specific missions for the Corps.

This demo shows you a glimpse of the *Dagger's Rage* world, allowing you to buy weapons with the money you start with, and explore other cities. When you take off from the city, you have the chance to guide your ship to another city with the arrow keys. If you encounter enemy ships, the view will transfer to a close up view of the area of the battle. You can configure the controls to either keyboard or joystick from the options menu. You start the game with level one lasers and level one missiles, and can select your weapons by pressing 1-5.



If you're not quick enough, or don't have weapons strong enough, you can end up toasted by some anti-social space buccaneers.

While in a dogfight, use F1 to toggle between keyboard and joystick. On the keyboard, the arrow keys will steer your ship, the spacebar will fire, and the Tab key will trigger your turbo boosters. On the joystick, the X- and Y-axis will steer and button 2 will fire your turbos, while button 1 will fire your weapons. The turbo boost will help get you out of quite a few messes, but be careful that you don't fly into the red zone surrounding the battle area, or you'll be branded a coward.

While you're flying around the planet, you can enter another city when you are over it by hitting the spacebar. This will give you the choice of landing in the city, or going into orbit, where you can fly to other systems. Be careful — since you can't save your game or fly missions to earn money in this demo, any enemy outside of the system will be too much for you to handle with your limited weapons and armor.

It will take some split-second timing an a lot of fancy flying to battle your way through a few levels of this hot demo. Keep your wits about you, and you'll be the best pilot around.

HINT

When you first exit the city, you're likely to encounter some stiff opposition from pirates. But here's a tip to get you started: When you start a new game, go to the shipyards and select Buy Weapons. Sell the weapons in your first and second weapons bank. Then you can buy some Level 3 missiles and ammunition. Now, when you battle the pirates, you'll have a fighting chance.

3D Table Sports

Company: Time Warner Interactive
Phone: (800) 565-8944
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade Table Sports
Required: 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \TABLE\INSTALL.EXE

If you've always wanted your own regulation-sized air hockey table, we've got a treat for you. SlamHockey, one of the three games included in *3D Table Sports*, will take you back to the time when smashing that floating puck into your opponent's goal slot was one of the greatest feelings on earth.

You can work your way up to higher levels of difficulty as you strive to beat the computer opponent. Be careful — the computer likes to move into your turf to try to hit the puck into your goal at close range. But you can use that to your advantage. If, however, you want to play the traditional way, you can click on "Options" before you begin a game, and select a "Classic" style game, where the computer stays on his side of the court, limiting the computer's reach.

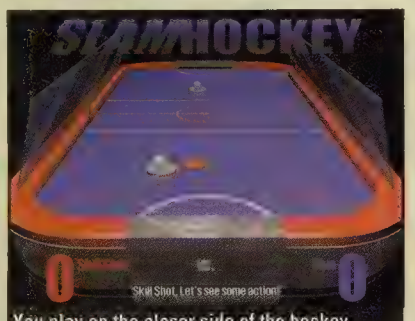
HINT

You'll notice when you play SlamHockey in Battle Mode (Full Court) that the computer opponent likes to move his paddle onto your side immediately when you serve. If you time it right, you can slam the puck off the side and into his goal while he's still on his way over.

Control your paddle with the mouse. Clicking the left mouse button when it's your turn to serve will put the puck directly in front of you. You can play up to three points in this demo, but we're sure that as you move upwards against the computer, you'll find that it will get harder and harder to score those three points before the AI manages to.

The two other games in the demo, Power Hoops and Foosball, are non-playable demos. If you click on them, then click "demo", you'll see the computer play a sample game from the full version.

These games are the hottest computer reproductions of table sports we've seen. Little can compare to the real thing, but these come pretty darn close.



You play on the closer side of the hockey table. Watch that blue paddle because it likes to come onto your side.

A FIVE FOOT TAIL THAT KNOCKS ME FLAT ON MY BUTT

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PC CD-ROM

Product Information Number 146



supreme weirdness

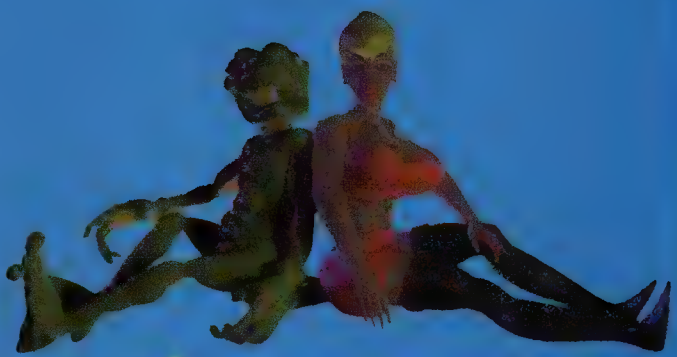
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105 locations and...
supreme weirdness.



KINGDOM O' MAGIC

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Product Information Number 202

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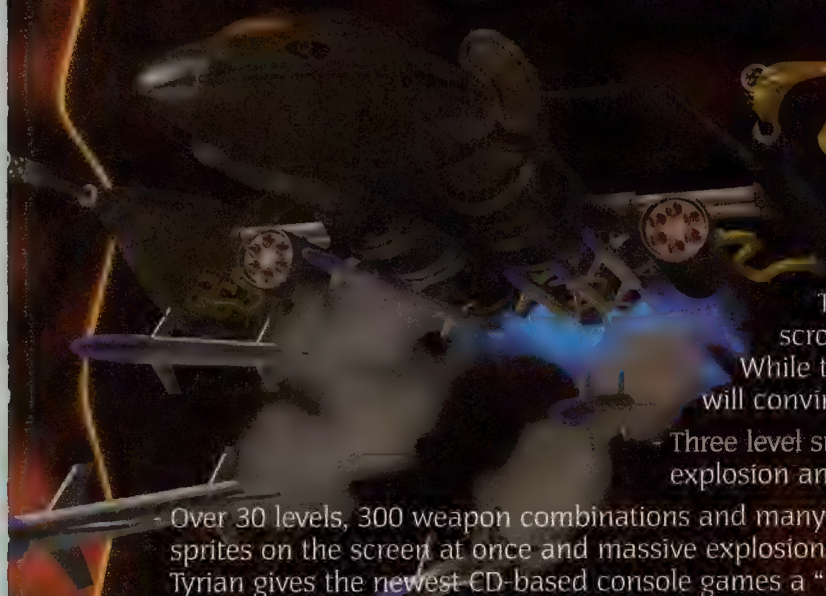
Epic's official ftp site: ftp.uml.edu in the msdos/games/epic directory

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Tyrian

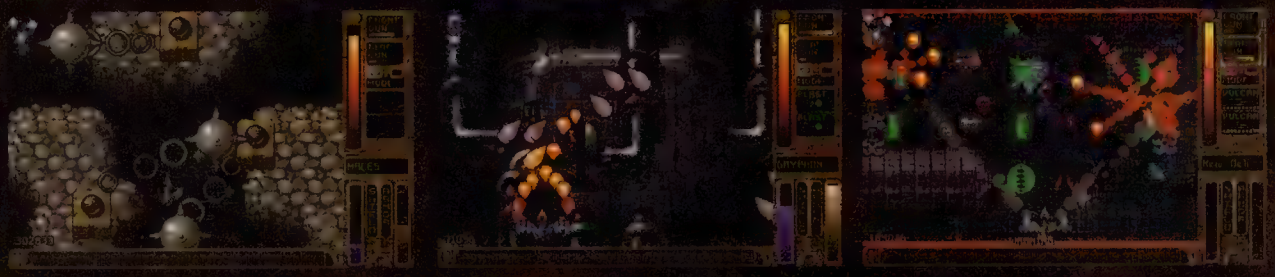
THE ULTIMATE PC SHOOTER

Tyrian is sure to be considered the hottest scrolling action-shooter ever released for the PC. While this is certainly a bold claim we think one play will convince you. Check this out:

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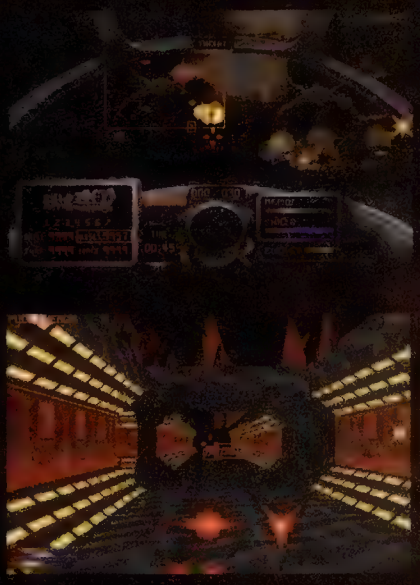
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RADIX: BEYOND THE VOID is an intense 3D action game developed for the PC platform. You'll fly down alien infested tunnels of the Theta-2 base as well as inside the massive alien mothership. You will also fly into the Void, where unknown terrors await you. It'll take great persistence and skill to navigate the small assault fighter through the winding tunnels and corridors to successfully accomplish your mission. (Un)fortunately, heavy alien resistance will attempt to hinder your objective. For more details visit our web site, www.epicgames.com Three huge episodes - **$35.00**



Product Information Number 129

Josephine: Portrait of an Assassin

Company: MediaAge Software
Phone: (800) 711-1161
Release Date: Available Now
Category: First Person Shooter
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Windows 95 (Full Version will support Windows 3.1)
Install: \JOSEPHIN\SETUP.EXE

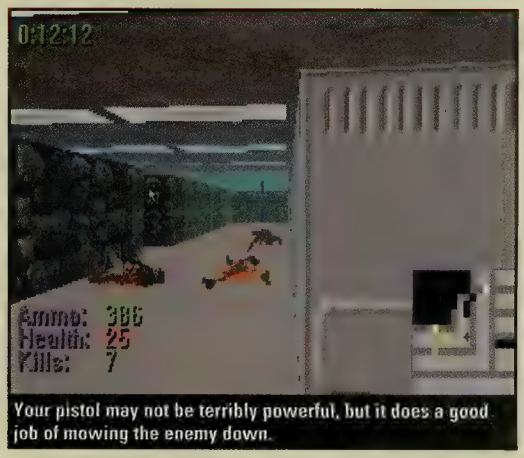
When an obscure branch of the CIA hires a convicted killer to do their dirty work for them, she gets caught up in a maelstrom of intrigue and power. You control the not-so-innocent heroine as she works through the objectives set for her by her superiors. When the killings she performs move from dictators and anti-American terrorists to prominent businessmen and politicians, she begins to realize she is helping an organization bent on national domination. And she is the only one who can stand in their way.

You can play through the first mission in the demo of MediaAge's new first person shooter. Blending full-motion video with first person action, *Josephine* throws you into a world where death lurks around every corner.

The first thing you'll want to do is select a weapon. Press the number keys to choose one — although some are not available yet. Pressing 1 will arm your pistol with a silencer, a good weapon to start with. If you press "M," a map of your immediate surroundings will appear, with red squares showing the location of your enemies, and white squares revealing doorways.

You can move your character with the mouse or keyboard; we preferred the latter. The Control keys will fire, and the spacebar will open doors. In order to play full-screen rather than in the window you start with, press F2.

TECHNICAL NOTE: At press time, the final version of Microsoft's "directx" had not yet been released. Josephine requires "directx" to run properly. You can pick it up on the MediaAge website: http://fox.nstn.ca/~mediaage.



Your pistol may not be terribly powerful, but it does a good job of mowing the enemy down.

JUST FOR FUN

The documentation that comes with the game says that killing the bad guys is "optional." Just for fun, see how far you can get without firing a weapon of any kind. It takes speed, but it's possible.

Fury³

Company: Microsoft
Phone: (206) 637-9308
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade Shooter
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 17MB Hard Drive Space; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \FURY3\FURY3X

In their first serious action game for the PC market, Microsoft is coming out strong with *Fury³*, a flight shooter that will make your head spin. Using an engine similar to the one in *Terminal Velocity*, you'll have the opportunity to shoot down hundreds of ships, gain countless bonus items, and fly through tunnels where only your lightening reflexes can save you from certain doom.

Story, you ask? OK, here goes: The Terrans developed a superior race of beings for the military called the Bions during the IP Wars. With the help of these super-soldiers, they won. Now, the resulting government, the Coalition of Independent Planets, has a problem on its hands. The Bions continued their aggressive ways, and although they were thought to be destroyed, it's been discovered that they are spreading out from the planet Fury. You are a member of The Council of Peace, the military arm of the Coalition. It's your job to wipe out the Bion threat to civilization. You will fly to eight planets that are infested with Bions, and each planet will have three missions. In this demo, you can fly the first mission on the first planet.

You can control your ship with the joystick or arrow keys. Button one will fire your lasers, and when you've acquired the turbo bonus items, button two will give you that extra burst of speed. Items will appear when you blow up other ships, or when you blow up enemy ground structures. Fly through the items to bring them aboard. When you have gained other weapons, you can select them with the number keys. Each time you gain an item, you will see a number in parentheses next to it. That is the number you use to select it.

You can fly right through the game to finish the mission. However, you won't earn many points that way. While heading toward your goal (shown by the compass in the upper right corner of the screen), hit the Tab key occasionally to take a look at your satellite map. You'll be able to see much more this way, and be able to identify tunnels and structures you wouldn't ordinarily see on your compass. The legend for the items is simple — dots that pulsate from yellow to red are flying enemies, green dots are ground targets, yellow dots are tunnel entrances, and blue dots are powerups. When the air targets register on the micro-map around your compass, they will be in a + or - symbol. The + means the target is above you, and the - means the target is below.

With multiple settings of detail for slow to fast machines, and several difficulty settings, we're sure everyone will have some fun with this hot title. For more info, check out our review of this action-packed game on page 260.



Be Sure to Shoot to Kill

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ZOOP - IF YOU START YOU MAY NEVER STOP



(Dream cycle of a normal and healthy teen)



(Dream cycle of a teen who plays *ZOOP*)

Warning! ***ZOOP*** **looks and plays like an innocent game, but extensive play may cause the following symptoms: loss of friends, loss of appetite, insomnia and excessive battery consumption. Whenever possible, avoid play.**

The mental anguish of playing *ZOOP* grows until one day it manifests itself on your face.

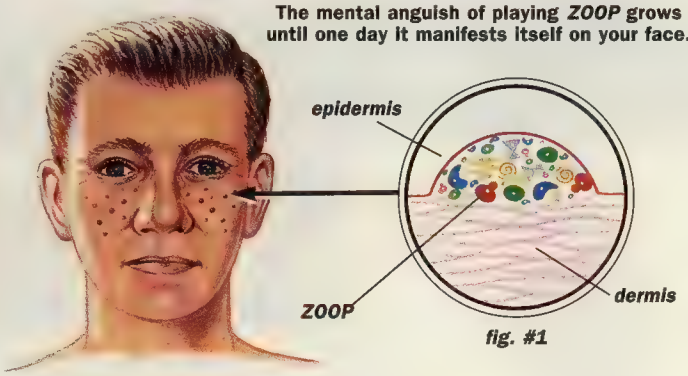
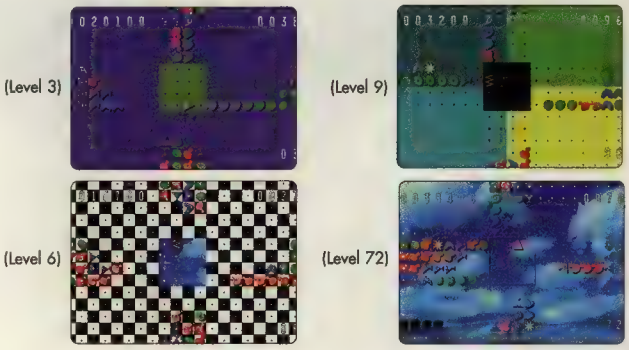
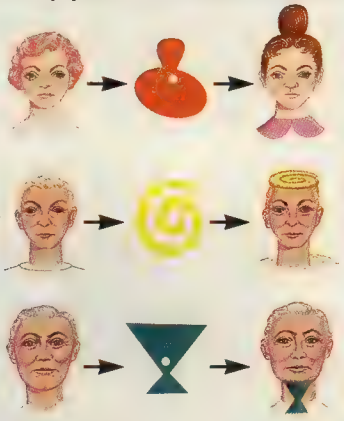


fig. #1

THE DEPTHS OF *ZOOP*



Research has shown the longer you play *ZOOP*, the more you actually start taking on the physical characteristics of *ZOOP*.



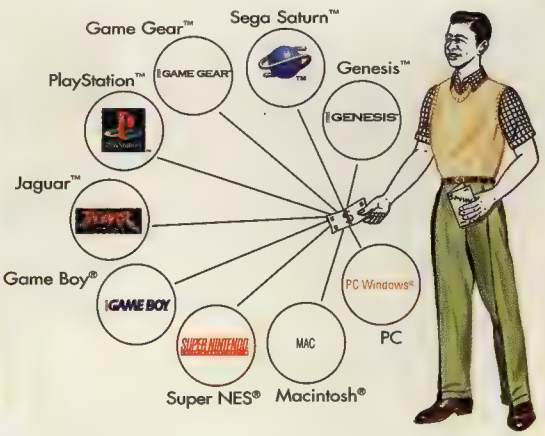
(Prolonged psychological effects are still under study.)

MONEY SPENDING PATTERNS.

before *ZOOP*:



after *ZOOP*:



Developed By Bookstone

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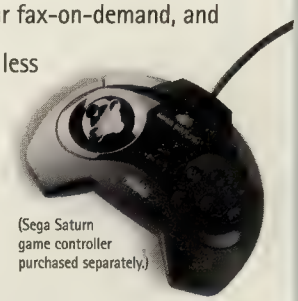


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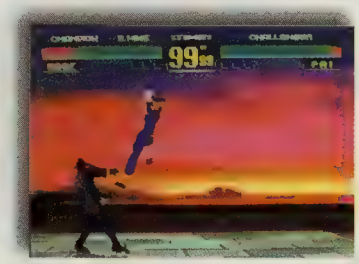
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hostile territory

domination is



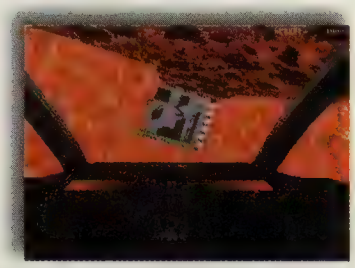


Virtua Fighter Remix

PUSH THE EDGE



NASCAR Racing



Interplay's Descent™: Destination Saturn

DIAMOND
MULTIMEDIA

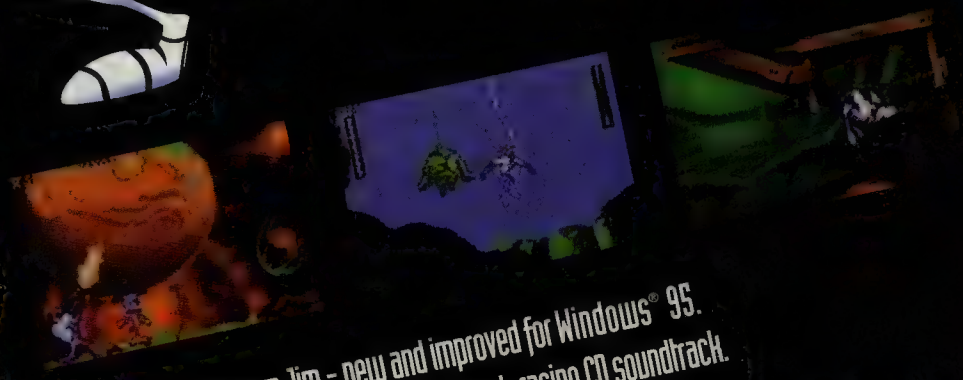
A passion for performance.

Product Information Number 119

"maybe if you didn't play with your worm so much . . ."







The hit video game - Earthworm Jim - new and improved for Windows® 95.
Twenty potent levels. Pumping 256-color graphics. Heart-racing CD soundtrack.
It can get distracting.

Shiny DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVISION®

Worm your way to http://www.activision.com and win!

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Product Information Number 89

3-D Ultra Pinball

Company: Sierra On-Line
Phone: (800) 757-7707
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Pinball
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; SVGA
Install: \UPINBALL\SETUP.EXE

Sierra On-Line, the gaming giant responsible for adventures like the Kings Quest and Space Quest series, has come up with a pinball game for Windows that will blow you away. You get to play a timed five minutes with five balls in this one-table demo. The graphics are amazing, borrowing somewhat from Sierra's strategy game *Outpost*.

Since you're playing on a "space colony," not just a pinball table, there are all kinds of things you can do with your silvery globe. You'll hit the ball into caves, colony buildings, spaceports, and more. The tasks you'll have to perform range from getting your ball into a glider that will gently deposit the sphere back near your left flipper, to clearing the area of bulldozers that block your way. You'll have to navigate meteor showers, and blow away the dozers that block your entrance into smaller "mini-tables" to the side of the main one, each of them with its own set of flippers and bonus targets.

CHALLENGE

Putting together the biggest issue ever of *PC Gamer* is no easy task. Nevertheless, there's always time for a bit of pinball action. The top score any of us managed to get was in the vicinity of 30,000,000 points. We challenge you to do as well while putting together a holiday extravaganza!

Along with some stunning graphics, *3-D Ultra Pinball* offers a variety of sound bites to enhance the pinball experience. You'll be given commands from the computer on your next target, and the best method to gain points.

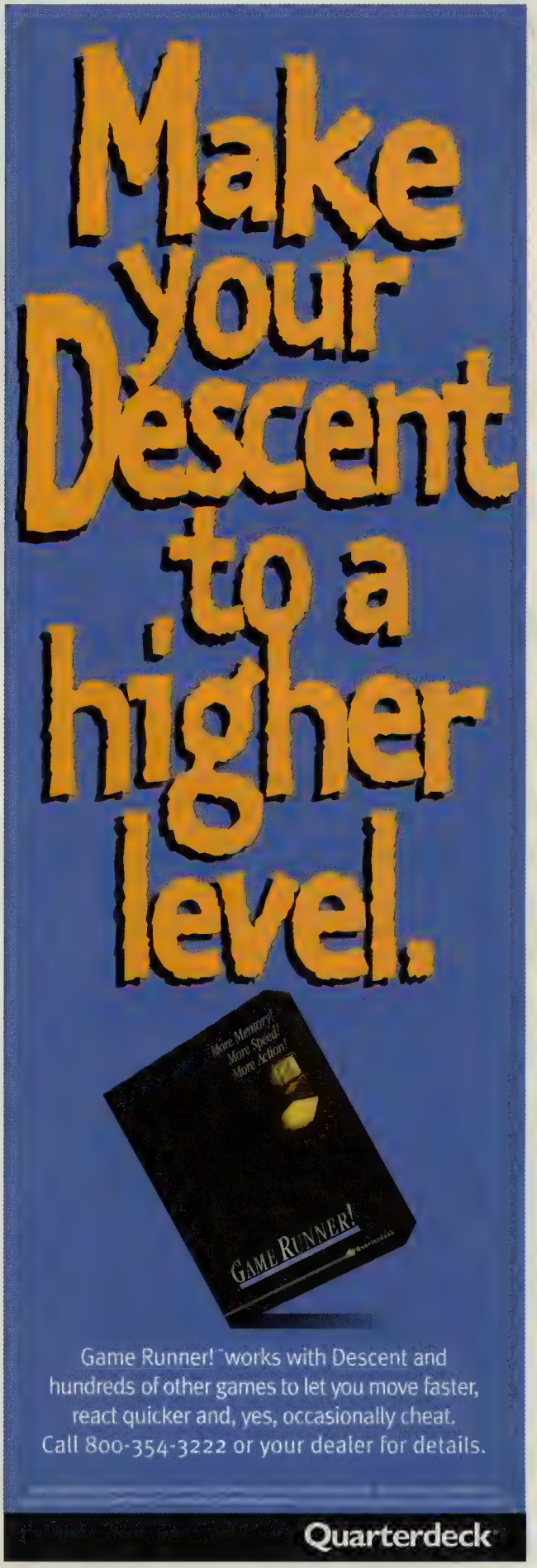
The mini-tables off to the sides make a great goal. You need to accomplish a few tasks before the doorway to one of these areas opens. Or, if you want to cheat, you can barely tap your ball with the plunger. It will go up the chute a little way, and if it goes just past the opening to the mini-table on the right, it will be launched into the bonus area.

To start things off, you'll want to hit your orb into the glider twice. This will initiate the bonus when you land the ball in the center of the large structure at the top of the screen. Getting the ball directly up to the center is no easy task, but if you're persistent, it can be done.

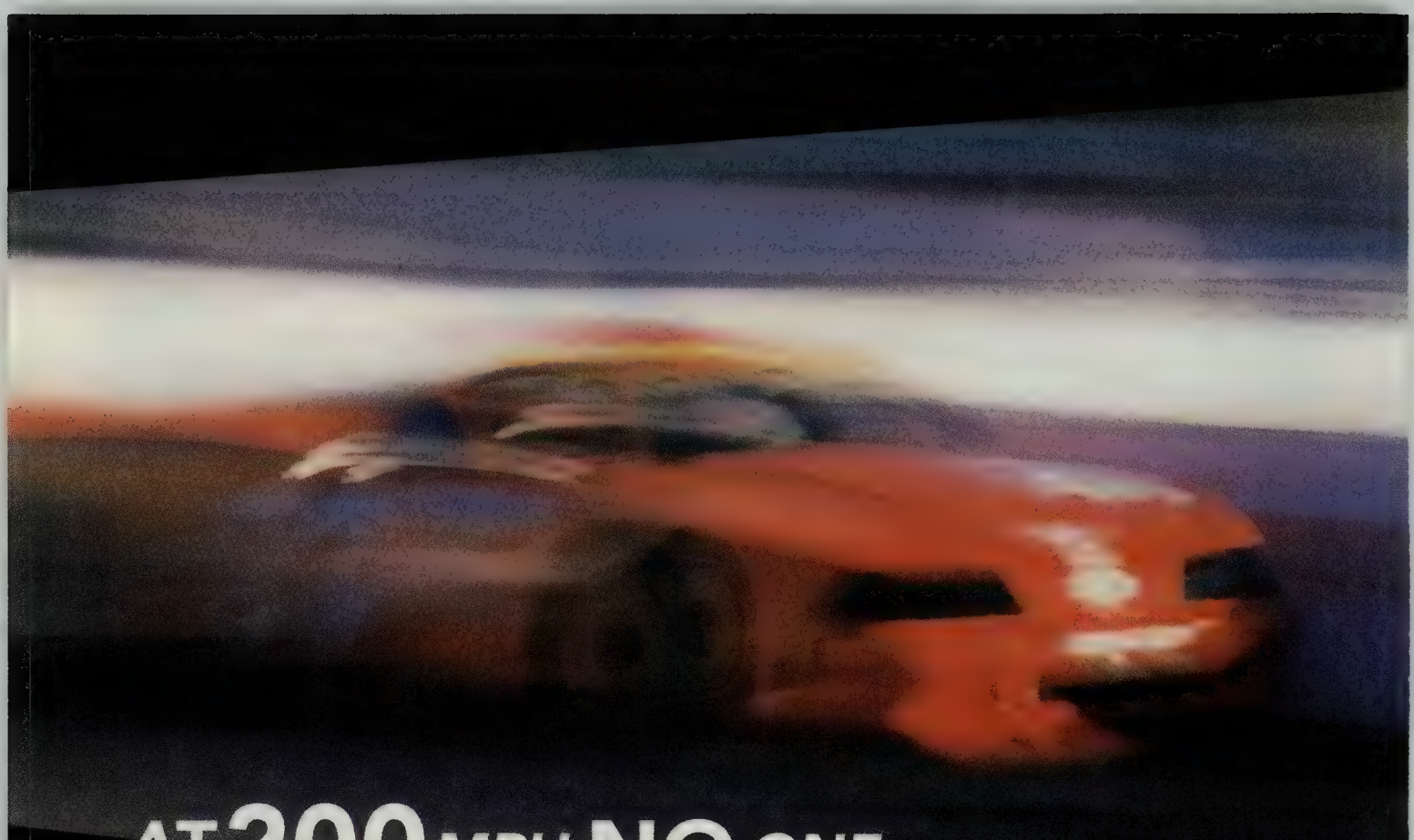
If you're a pinball aficionado, this is definitely a title to check out. The full version will contain three tables to challenge your pinball skill. If you want to know more, check out the offical *PC Gamer* opinion in the review on page 237.



The stunning graphics and unique board layout makes *3-D Ultra Pinball* one of the prettiest computer pinball games we've seen.



Product Information Number 197



AT 200 MPH NO ONE CAN SEE YOU SWEAT.



It's like having your own private racecourse. Where speed limits don't exist. Where you can take your car up to 200mph, slide it sideways around corners and shift at the redline in every gear. With Screamer you can push your driving skills and PC to the limit. With incredibly realistic real-time 3-D graphics, multiple cars, tracks, and points of view to choose from, you'll never tire of the action. Race against the clock or compete head to head with up to six players on a network. You can almost smell the rubber burning.





SCREAMER

Available on PC CD-ROM.

Check out Screamer contest info on http://www.vie.com

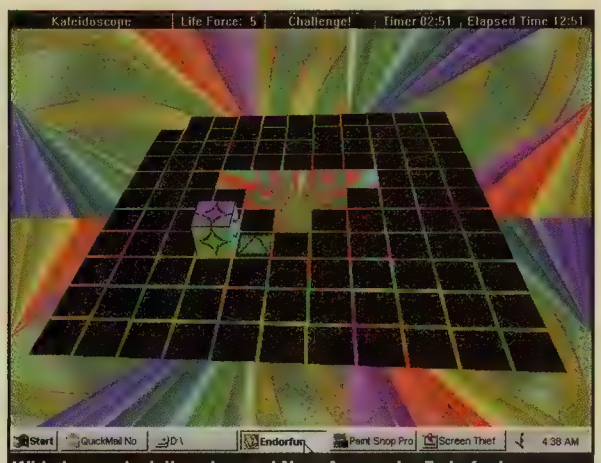
Graffiti

Interactive entertainment

KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+

Screamer ©1995 Graffiti di Antonio Farina. 1995 Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Portions copyright ©1995 Image Space Incorporated. All rights reserved. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Enterprises, Ltd.

Product Information Number 257



With the psychedelic colors and New-Age music, *Endorfun* is designed to be a relaxing and calming experience.

Endorfun

Company: Time Warner Interactive
Phone: (800) 565-8944
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action Puzzle
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \ENDORFUN\ENDORFUN.EXE

You are good and you do good things. You don't have to please others. You deserve love, happiness and prosperity. You are free." These are some of the "Endoisms" you'll experience in this subliminal, nurturing demo by Time Warner Interactive.

The gameplay is simple. You move a cube around an arena, and your goal is to roll the cube over the colored square with the symbol inside of it. The trick is, you have to match the color of the square on the top of the cube when in rolls into the colored squares' spot.

That's not all there is to this unique title, though. Throughout the game you will be subjected to subliminal messages meant to make you feel better and believe in yourself. Stuart Smalley would love it...



If you don't manage to tag the colored square before your time is up, you will receive a supportive message.

You can use the mouse or the keyboard to move the cube, but it's easiest to use the keyboard. In this demo, only one type of game is available — Kaleidoscope. You can toggle music, sound effects, and animations through the Options menu. To reach the menu after gameplay has started, simply click with the left mouse button.

As you move further on in the game, the boards will change shape to pose more of a challenge. Also, colored squares that block your way will slowly appear. You can get rid of them the same way you vanish the target square — roll over them with the matching color on the top of the cube.

This game takes practice, and if you feel yourself getting frustrated, don't push it. The purpose of the game is, after all, to make you feel better about yourself.

JUST FOR FUN

Getting the cube to match the color of the square you're trying to run over can be tricky. It may be a while before you get the hang of it. Just for fun, see how far you can get in the game by moving the cube randomly around and then trying to run over the target square, without consciously trying to match the colors.

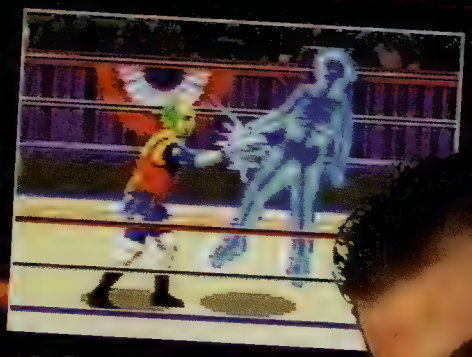


Product Information Number 198

No Pain, No Game!



ALL NEW MAYHEM MOVES LIKE THE SHOCKING "HAND BUZZER"!



NO RING CAN CONTAIN WWF® WRESTLEMANIA®!



MORE REALISTIC WRESTLING ACTION THAN EVER—REVERSALS, PILEDRIVERS AND BODYSLAMS!

WWF® WRESTLEMANIA

THE ARCADE GAME

Take Wrestling to the Extreme!



FOR TIPS, TRICKS AND STRATEGY FROM YOUR FAVORITE WWF® SUPERSTARS!

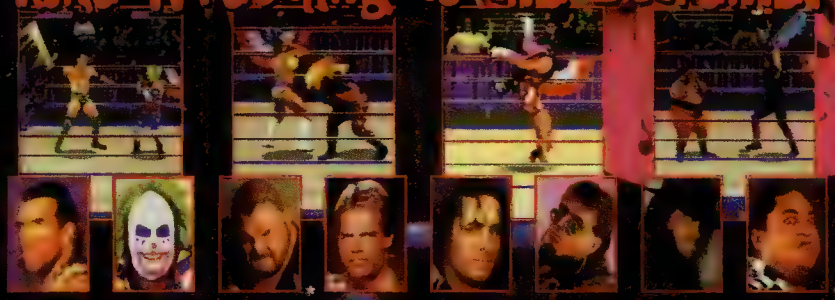
SUPER NES®

GENESIS™

32X™

PLAYSTATION™

PC CD-ROM



KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+

OFFICIAL WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION LICENSED PRODUCT

Acclaim® entertainment inc.

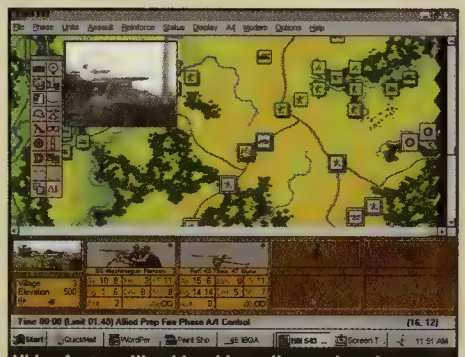
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Battleground: Ardennes

Company: Talon Soft
Phone: (410) 821-7282
Release Date: Available Now
Category: War Sim
Required: 386DX/33; 4MB RAM; Windows 3.1
Install: \BGA\BGADEMO.EXE

With *Battleground: Ardennes*, Talon Soft has shown what Windows can do for a war simulation. Incorporating live footage of the weapons and vehicles used in World War Two, this is a game of magnificent proportion and realism.

You can choose to play either as Axis or Allies. When you start the demo, you'll be presented with a box that will let you choose which side is played which way. You can choose from Manual, Semi-Automatic, Automatic, and Automatic Field Of View. Manual will allow you to control all movement and firing. Semi-Automatic puts you in charge of only the important decisions, like whether or not to attack, and lets the computer do the rest. In Automatic, the computer takes control. You would use this to play a game against the computer.



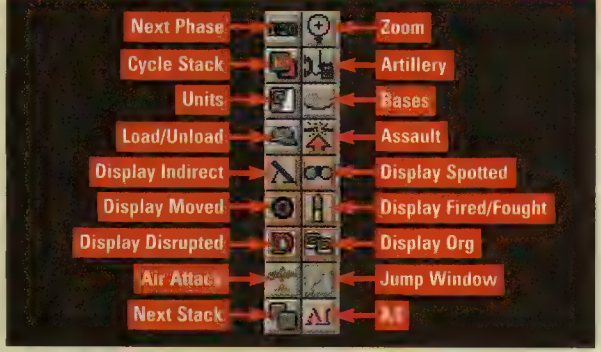
Video footage like this adds realism and excitement to the battle at Ardennes.

Automatic FOV is the same as Automatic, but in FOV, you only see units that are nearby. When you first see them, they will appear as boxes with a question mark, but at the beginning of the next phase, they will be identified.

The demo lasts for 11 turns, each of which has several phases. You play with the mouse, selecting the piece to move or fire, and then moving them. Since you can stack units in one hex, click on the stack of units you want to perform an action, and choose from the unit list at the bottom of the screen which units you want to perform the action. This applies to firing or moving.

Since gameplay is highly involved and complex, you might want to read the online help. However, the control is simple enough that you should have no trouble jumping right in and playing. If you have a slower computer or 4MB RAM, you might want to turn off the video segments or the 3D map to speed the action up.

Tools to Use in Battle



Let your Wing Commander take off.



Game Runner!™ works with Wing Commander and hundreds of other games to let you move faster, react quicker and, yes, occasionally cheat.
Call 800-354-3222 or your dealer for details.

Quarterdeck

Product Information Number 199

Escape or Die.









DeathKeep™ is AD&D® dungeon delving the way you like it – fast, furious and fun! Fight your way through more than 25 eerie dungeons, each with 8 levels. Explore icy caverns, 3 ominous towers and a fantastic final dungeon! Battle over 30 different monsters. Avoid insidious traps. Solve brain-busting puzzles. Jump, fly and even fall if you're not careful. The 3-D environment means you can look up, down, and all around. Everything you view is in a natural perspective – including the evil Necromancer who waits at the end of your journey!

To order: Visit your local software retailer or call 1-800-601-PLAY with VISA/MC (North America only).

Available on CD-ROM for WINDOWS® 95 and 3DO Interactive Multiplayer.



TEEN T AGES 13+

Bonus!

Includes Special Collector's Edition Phone Debit Card — good for *5 Free Minutes* on SSI's Hint Line!



SSI®

A MINDSCAPE® COMPANY

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Product Information Number 226

Unnecessary Roughness

Company: Accolade
Phone: (408) 296-8400
Release Date: End of November
Category: Football Sim
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; VESA Compatible Video Card
Install: \UR96\INSTALL.EXE

Get ready, football fans, it's time for one of the best-looking football sims yet. You can play as either the San Francisco 49ers or the Dallas Cowboys in this hot new demo from Accolade. You'll have a comprehensive play-book, and you'll even be able to create you own plays if you want. If you've ever dreamed of coaching a team or throwing the winning passes, this game's for you.

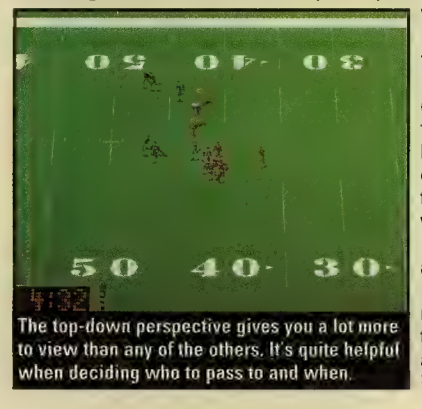
There are several options you can control in this demo. From toggling referees to wind speed, you can make gameplay as hard or as easy as you like. You can even toggle fatigue in your players, or choose to play as a coach and call the plays, or call the plays and run them. There are only a few things missing in this demo. You play only one quarter of a game, and you can choose whether that's three to fifteen minutes. Season play is disabled, but you can still look at the menus to see what it would look like. The construction mode is still active, though, so you can tweak and create plays for defense and offense as much as you like. You can also try out the practice drills, where you sharpen your skills at punting, kickoffs, and field goals.

HINT

There are several views available in this demo. You can cycle through them by using the number keys on the top of the keyboard. We suggest pressing 7 for an overhead view. It works best when trying to figure out when to pass to your receivers. Otherwise, it's difficult to see how well they are covered.

You might want to control the game with the keyboard, but we recommend using a gamepad. If you use the keyboard, you can control the movement of the players with the keypad arrows. When you choose a play from the play-book, press the letter corresponding to the play you like. You can flip through the pages of the book with the Z and C keys. If you use the gamepad or joystick to choose a play, you have tomove the stick in the direction indicated next to the name of the play and press button two. To flip through the pages, move the stick to the bottom corners. For more information on how to play the game, check out the General Help option from the main menu.

TECHNICAL NOTE: This demo may not work too well with some video cards. If you are having problems, you may have to load a vesa driver like UNIVESA.EXE. If you load UNIVESA and start the demo and you can't see the screen, exit the demo and then run it again. Running it the second time initializes the driver properly. If you cannot read the screen the first time, you can exit by letting it load for a few seconds, and pressing escape. This will give you the prompt to exit, and you can hit return to exit the game. Also, this demo requires quite a bit of memory. If you're trying to run it through our front end, you may not have enough. Exit our front end, go to DOS, and run the demo by moving to the directory with "cd\ur96demo" and then type "ur96demo." This may be a lot of trouble, but we assure you that it's worth it.



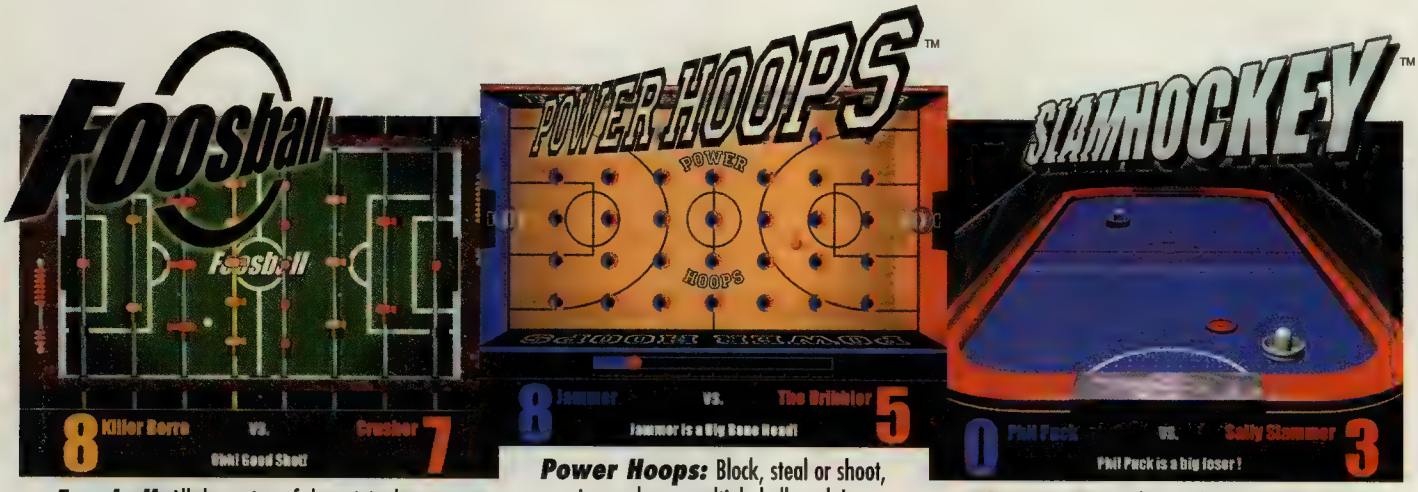
The top-down perspective gives you a lot more to view than any of the others. It's quite helpful when deciding who to pass to and when.



3-D TABLE SPORTS™
WE'VE INCLUDED EVERYTHING...



EXCEPT THIS.



Foosball: All the action of the original–spin, pass, block, and score!

Power Hoops: Block, steal or shoot, in regular or multiple ball mode!

SlamHockey: Chip it, chop it, cut it! Even go over the line in "super battle mode!"

If you're looking for classic table game action with a digital twist, 3-D Table Sports is it! You get Foosball, SlamHockey and Power Hoops, all on one CD-ROM. Each game features fully-rendered 3-D tables, lots of play options, 10 difficulty levels, and network and modem support for tournament and league play. In fact, 3-D Table Sports gives you everything you could ever expect in a table game...*except a place to put your quarters!*



mass•media

TIME WARNER INTERACTIVE

BBS: 1-818-295-6730 • **e-mail:** TWIinfo@aol.com • **America Online®:** Keyword: TWI • **World Wide Web:** http://www.pathfinder.com/twi

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See your local software retailer or call 1-800-482-3766 to order direct.

Product Information Number 243

PlayNet

Company: PlayNet
Phone: (800) PLAY-NET
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 9600 Baud Modem
Install: \PLAYNET\DOOM1N2 or HERETIC

So you want to play *Doom* or *Heretic* across the phone lines, but you just can't seem to find anybody who's willing to join you in a Deathmatch at 1 a.m.? Well, look no further. *PlayNet* is a multiplayer network that's been established specifically to take advantage of the modem capabilities of these great multiplayer games and to give you the opportunity to play with like-minded Deathmatchers everywhere.

In addition to support for *Doom* and *Doom II*, PlayNet now supports *Heretic*, and the newest multiplayer heavyweight, *Descent*. You'll also get other features you'd expect from an online service, like shopping, file libraries, chat areas and the ever-present and ever-useful E-mail. Imagine — an entire community of death-dealing Doomers waiting for action!

To run *PlayNet* you'll need *Doom*, *Doom II*, *Heretic*, or *Descent*, a 9600 baud modem and, of course, this front end to run it all.

After installation, you'll need to fill out the configuration screens to get things set up properly. After that, you'll be able to make new friends and then, if you act real nice, kill them. Payment info is online, and your initial call is absolutely free.



Need to pump new life into *Doom* and *Heretic*? Hop on to PlayNet and go head-to-head.

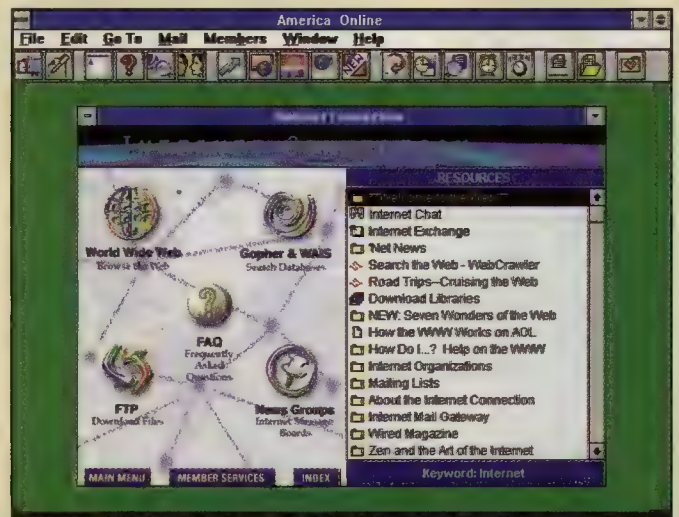
As of this writing the rates for *PlayNet, Inc.* were:

Target Class	**$10.00**	**5 hours**
Killer Class	**$25.00**	**13 hours**
Assassin Class	**$50.00**	**30 hours**

America Online

Company: America Online
Phone: (800) 827-3338
Required: 386; 4MB RAM; VGA; Mouse; Modem; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \AOL\FULLDIAG.EXE

Hop onto the 'Net with America Online, one of the leading online services in America today. With AOL's excellent Windows interface as your guide, you'll send and receive electronic mail all over the planet, browse the Internet's World Wide Web for new and fascinating information, read and contribute to Usenet Newsgroups (an incredibly huge forum for discussions on just about any topic you can imagine), enter live chat chambers, and exchange views with hundreds of people at any given time. You can even attend live conferences with celebrities, from movie stars to leaders in scientific exploration. AOL could be your doorway to the Information Superhighway — so go ahead and log on and give it a try. You'll certainly be glad you did.



Take one of the friendliest ramps onto the Information Superhighway with America Online.

In *The CD*'s cover sleeve this month, you'll find an account number and password. All you need to do to get yourself up and running is to open Windows and select Run from the File Menu. Type "D:\AOL\FULLDIAG," where "D" is the name of your CD-ROM drive. The setup program will then walk you through creating a new account on the fastest growing online service in the industry. Once you customize your account, you'll receive your first 10 hours — as well as your first month's service — absolutely free. After that, the service is a low $9.95 a month, which includes five free hours, and $2.95 for each additional hour.

AOL has tons of great forums to suit any taste. Do a little exploring, and you'll find it hard to log off. You'll be amazed with what you can find with a simple click of a mouse button.

TIP

AOL has comprehensive support for PC gamers. When you log on, select "Go To" from the menu bar, then type in "pc games" and press Enter. You'll soon find yourself in AOL's PC Games Forum, the jumping-off point for all kinds of support for your favorite games. You can enter the Meeting Place for real-time conversations, and swap the latest tips with fellow gamers; visit the File Library and get walk-throughs and hints for those tough-to-beat games; or down load the newest, hottest shareware titles around. Check out the Industry Connection, and you can meet the developers and designers of your favorite games or E-mail companies for technical support.

THE FLOPPY

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS



Burn up the racetracks in Virgin's latest racing sim — *Screamer*.

Quick Start: The Floppy

The HD disk

Installation couldn't be easier!

1. Insert the 3.5" diskette and change to that drive (usually A or B).
2. Type SCREAMER at the DOS prompt and press Enter. This will create a /SCREAMER directory on your hard drive.
3. Go to the /SCREAMER directory on your hard drive and type SCREAMER.

If Nothing Works...

Unfortunately, we can't provide technical support for problems you may encounter with *The Floppy* or *Screamer*. But should your copy fail to run at all, or display error messages that indicate the disk itself is bad, send a letter to the address at the right for replacement.

The Floppy is manufactured by MegaSoft, one of the foremost disk duplicators in America. Before duplication, it is rigorously tested and certified to be virus-free.

The Floppy Replacement
December 1995
PC Gamer
1350 Old Bayshore Highway
Suite 210
Burlingame, CA 94010

Please indicate any error message that you receive.

Screamer

Company: Virgin Interactive
Phone: (714) 833-1999
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Racing
Required: 486/66; 8MB RAM
Install: \SCREAMER\SCREAMER.BAT

Strap into the driver's seat and get ready to be blown way by this new racing sim from Virgin Interactive. In a race against nine other cars, you need to prove your strength and speed in head-to-head competition. As you drive through city streets, pass up the other cars, and, for heaven's sake, try to keep all four wheels on the road!

You will race a three-lap track in this demo of *Screamer*, with a certain amount of time to complete each lap. Fail to make it around in that time, and you're history. You'll need a steady hand and a good sense of driving to make it in one piece. Sneeze at the wrong time, and you could end up flipping your car end over end into the grandstands.

You can change the control configuration to suit your needs when you run setup. The default uses the up-arrow for acceleration, side-arrows for steering, and the spacebar for braking. The page-up and page-down keys will shift gears, but the demo has automatic shifting so you won't need them. To change the settings, select the control you want to change and press Enter. If you want a joystick, simply move the joystick in the direction you want and the setup program will read the movement. We found that it works best to use a joystick for forward and side to side control, while keeping the spacebar as the brake.

While driving, you'll reach some pretty excessive speeds. Remember that it's always a good idea to slow down while going into curves, or you may find yourself high in the sky, looking up at the ground as you careen through the air. Crashing your car won't hurt it in the race, but you'll lose some precious time. If you do not cross the finish line before the clock counts down, the race is over.

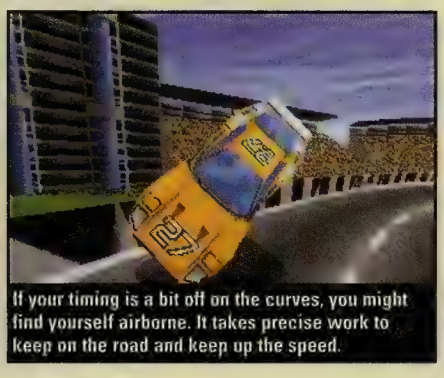
When you've finished your race, either by not making it to the finish line or by finishing first, you will be able to watch your skill in an instant replay. To skip the triumphant reminder or shameful show as the case may be, press escape, and you'll be able to try again.

CHALLENGE

After learning how to keep from bouncing off the walls of the track, the first place score for the fastest time in our offices was 1:19:57. Can you beat that? We'll give you a hint: When you're driving around corners, it's possible to slide around them without having to slow down. Just pull hard to the inside, and you'll screech your way around. It takes timing and practice, but it will reduce your time by a huge amount.



One of the several views is from inside your machine. It doesn't matter how you look at it, though, this is a speedy game!

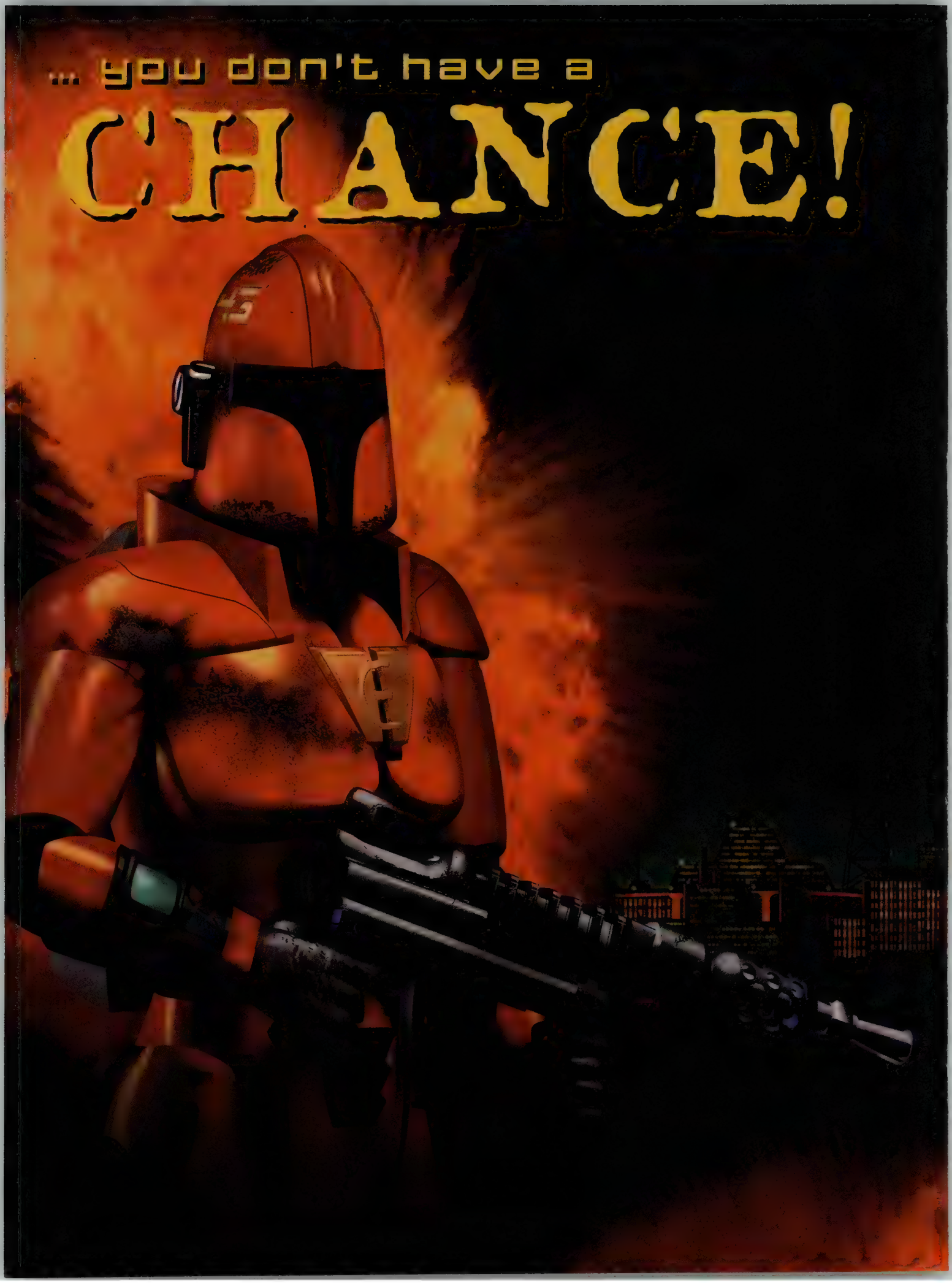


If your timing is a bit off on the curves, you might find yourself airborne. It takes precise work to keep on the road and keep up the speed.

If you don't have a

BAD ATTITUDE...




... you don't have a
CHANCE!

Nonstop action from a different perspective!

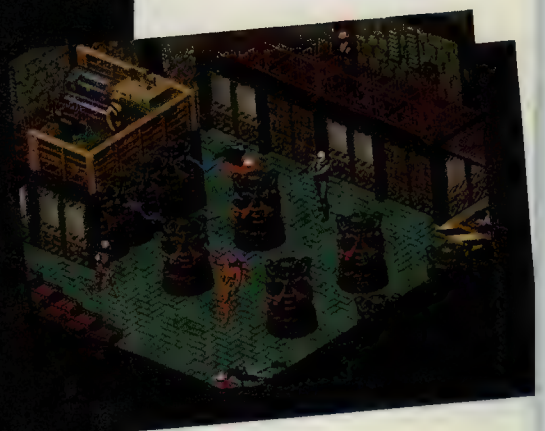
When the World Economic Consortium made you a Silencer, you were supposed to be the ultimate killing machine and follow orders without question.

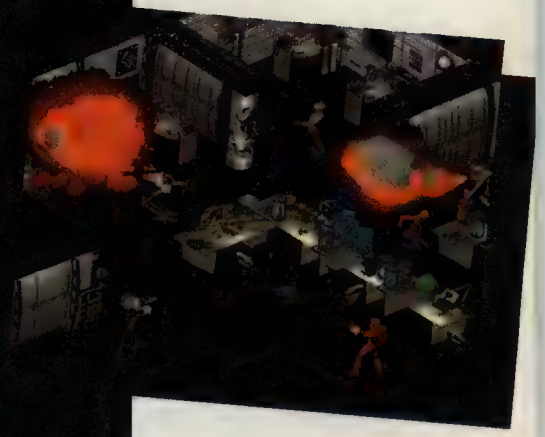
You had other ideas.

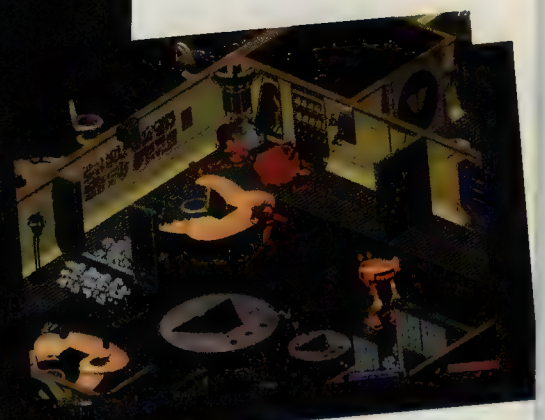
Now you fight for the Resistance against your former bosses. You're not trusted, but you're needed.

Elite shock troops, killer robots, booby-traps and mine fields ... they're all waiting to get you before you get them. But you've got the strength, you've got the attitude and most of all you've got the firepower to take on the challenge of **Crusader: No Remorse** — ORIGIN's most explosive game ever!









CRUSADER
NO REMORSE

ORIGIN

TEEN T AGES 13+

Voluntarily Rated by Publisher For Mature Players

http://www.ea.com/origin.html

Actual screens may vary. Made in U. S. A.

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HARDBALL 5

in a league by itself.



The all-time bestselling simulation of baseball! With a new, "closest-to-the-plate" camera view. You're twice as close to the action, with the largest strike zone in the game!



Our complete "stats construction set" instantly puts every stat and rating under the sun at your fingertips. Create unlimited custom stats displays for the ultimate managerial thrill!



New player animations are smoother and more detailed, letting you aim for the inside corner. "Zoom in" baserunner windows let you make your best pick-off move to the bag.



Watch your best reliever warming up in the bullpen, and analyze your starter's fatigue, pitch count, and performance. When he's ready to go, you're ready to go!



Create your own players from scratch, or modify any player's ratings, or even their physical attributes! The resulting player will be true-to-life, on-field and off.



Experience the best of baseball history with the bonus "Legends" League—12 great legendary teams from history, come to life in 12 beautifully rendered old-time stadiums.



Optional wide-angle pitcher and batter views recreate the traditional look of a broadcast baseball game in beautiful 256-color SVGA graphics!



For maximum variety in gameplay, change any manager's tendencies on any team and see the results play out on the field and in the stats.



Hot new user interface gives you instant access to any feature. View and manage your team from the field, from the dugout, and from the General Manager's office!



This "fifth generation" fielding simulation has additional play animations, baseball plays, and graphics realism, resulting in true-life baseball gameplay.



It's all here: pick-off plays, hit-and-run, suicide squeeze, towering pop-ups, and more. The ultimate simulation of baseball, for everyone who loves the game!



Sony PlayStation™
PC CD-ROM

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http://www.MindSpan.com/MindSpan/hb5.html

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Pax Imperia 2

Why stop with the galaxy? Go ahead and conquer the *universe*!

When the original *Pax Imperia* was published for the Macintosh, it garnered rave reviews. Now PC gamers can learn what all the shouting was about.

by William R. Trotter



Spaceship designs in *Pax Imperia 2* have a distinctive, rakish appearance, as shown in this cinematic cutscene — one of many spectacular animated sequences in the game.

FYI. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Pax Imperia 2
Developers: Blizzard, Changeling Software, Inc.
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment, 3152 Redhill Avenue, Suite 230, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, (714) 556-5571
Projected price: $49.95
Percentage complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Here's a game of galactic conquest that contains a fine balance of economics, technology, politics, and warfare.

What's so special?

The original *Pax Imperia* was highly praised for its originality and playability. Unfortunately, you had to be a Mac owner to play it, since there was never a PC version. Blizzard Entertainment gained an enviable reputation with last year's best-selling *Warcraft*; this new game should be another jewel in their crown.

Why should I care?

Pax 2 incorporates a number of fresh, intriguing concepts, and two years' worth of input from fans of the original game have given this sequel a keen, confident edge.

And when's it coming out?

Early 1996

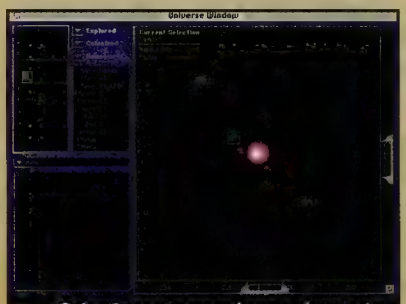
The words just roll off your tongue: "Pax Imperia." The peace of empire. The words are sonorous, suitable for being chiseled in marble. The term comes from the period of maximum Roman expansion and power, and it signifies a condition of order imposed by the might and authority of a centralized government.

Now visualize an "empire" millions of times the size of Rome's. Picture yourself at the center of it, with power beyond the wildest fantasies of Caesar.

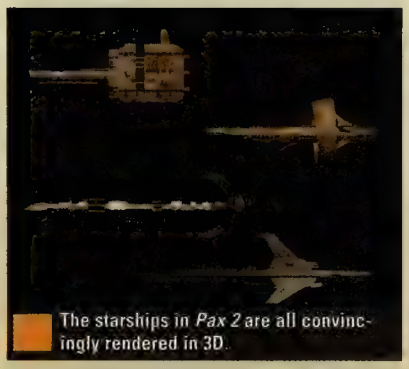
Or, as the inimitable Mel Brooks said in *History of the World, Part One*: "It's *good* to be the king!"

The playing field in *Pax Imperia 2* is as big as the universe itself: you *start* the game as the ruler of a galactic empire that's on the verge of expansion. Everything about this game has a sense of bigness, starting with the fact that its multi-player option allows for up to 16 human or computer opponents. Modem, network, and direct-link play are also available.

You can choose the size of your universe, up to fifty stars, with as many as ten planets per system. You can also include moons (one to three per planet),



Galactic sector maps have a clean, crisp layout and display a wealth of info.



The starships in *Pax 2* are all convincingly rendered in 3D.

wormholes, black holes, nebulae, and other space-time anomalies can be added to the mix, if you wish to add them. Planets will differ greatly in terms of habitability, surface configuration, and natural resources.

Once you've established your universe, the game's saga unfolds in the grand tradition of conquer-the-galaxy simulations: exploration, colonization, economic development, diplomacy, espionage, technological advancement, and warfare.

And while most players will want at least some combat, Blizzard points out that it is perfectly possible to play and win the game entirely through diplomatic and economic strategies — a nice, rather Machiavellian alternative that should make for a very refreshing gaming experience.

Each sector of your empire is presented on screens designed to have the look and feel of the presumed information-processing technology of the 26th Century. On one screen, you can instantly access information about planetary orbits, habitability, and who-owns-what. On another, you can obtain detailed views and information of each sector of each planet, showing structures (mines, cities, shipyards, research centers, etc.), and displaying pertinent information about the ruling governor of that planet.

If you like, you can micro-manage the development of each planet. Once your empire expands beyond a comfortable size, however, you're more likely to switch to the autobuild mode, which allows you to set specific parameters for planetary development — orders that your governors will dutifully carry out (some, of course, more competently than others).

You can also set general strategy/policy guidelines, and let your appointed officials set their own local policies regarding commerce and diplomacy. If things go awry at any point — and you can always access detailed reports about these matters — you can intervene directly.

Facts on *Pax*

Pax 2 is being co-developed by Blizzard and Changeling Software, in a relationship that seems remarkably harmonious. In a recent three-way phone conversation, *PCG* talked to Andrew Sispoidis of Changeling, and Bill Roper of Blizzard, about their magnum opus.

PCG: The most popular game of this genre in recent years was MicroProse's *Master of Orion*. If our readers could ask you just one question, it would probably be: how does your game compare to *MOO*?

A.S.: The original *Pax* took one approach, and *MOO* took a very different approach. I think what we've done in *Pax 2* is to combine the best aspects of both approaches. One thing we've done is to make the technology aspect *very* sophisticated — it's almost a game in itself. Another element is the political system — the multi-player interaction is more subtle and more elaborate than in any game we've seen before. I think *Master of Orion*, when it came out, represented a new generation of sci-fi strategy games, and I think *Pax 2*, when it comes out, will take the genre into yet another generation. We're building on all that's come before.

B.P.: Look at the number of player-possibilities we've built into it: *sixteen* players. We're firm believers that nothing is more fun than playing against your friends, no matter how good the computer may be.

PCG: How will the game's combat scenes be handled?

B.P.: Tactical combat is done in a modular fashion. You'll see lots of battle flicks, and receive detailed reports, but since you're the emperor, you basically take a strategic and grand-tactical approach and issue orders accordingly — it would not be realistic for you to control the actions of every ship. Your orders will then be carried out by your admirals, and you'll get constant updates on how well they're doing. You do, of course, have the option of sacking and replacing an incompetent commander, or promoting an exceptional one.

PCG: I like the depth of the political/diplomatic element — tell us a little more about that.

A.S.: That's one of the things we're proudest of. You have planetary governors, commanders, advisors — the whole bureaucratic layer-cake. And you also have special interest groups trying to influence things. Treason is a very real possibility. We've turned this part of *Pax 2* into almost a roleplaying game, to an extent that no other game in this genre has ever done. We've put all of these elements into a smooth-playing, great-looking package; we think it's an exceptional game.

"I think *Pax 2* will take the genre into yet another generation. We're building on all that's come before."

— Andrew Sispoidis, Changeling Software



As is traditional for games in the galactic-conquest genre, you can set up a custom-tailored universe, or you can allow the computer to generate one of the random parameters.



On the well-organized planetary management screens, you can keep track of construction, mining, and other vital aspects of your worlds' infastructure.



Combat in *Pax 2* is depicted through action-packed animations.



Pax 2's graphics do an excellent job of suggesting the vastness of space.

"We've put all of these elements into a smooth-playing, great-looking package; we think it's an exceptional game."

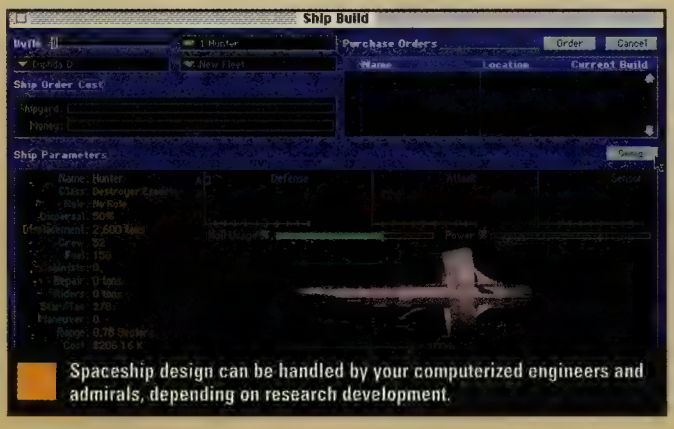
— Andrew Sispoidis

Colonists can be chosen from 15 different computer-generated species (some are good at warfare, some at commerce, some are born diplomats, etc.), which gives you the freedom to colonize planets with varying atmospheres, gravitational conditions, and temperature. If you're really in the mood to play God, however, you can custom-design your own species.

A major element in any expanding space empire is technological research. In this area, the designers of *Pax 2* have outdone themselves: using a research-point system, you can create more than 1,000 distinct technologies, including medical and genetic advancements, often quite exotic.

Starship design and deployment is vital, whether your main priority is military conquest or economic dominance. Available ship classes range from carriers and dreadnoughts to fleet-tenders and immense cargo vessels. Your technicians and admirals will automatically generate new ship designs, based of course on research breakthrough, and they'll usually do a reliable job of it.

If, however, you want to custom-design some specialized vessel, you can do so in great detail. Initially, ship designs are depicted as wire frame objects, which then morph-out into fully rendered three-dimensional image, even as you watch.



Spaceship design can be handled by your computerized engineers and admirals, depending on research development.

Battles are enacted in what Blizzard describes as a "rendered holographic simulation field." While I'm not exactly sure what that means, it translates — to judge from the demo sequences I've been looking at — into slick, exciting images of space combat.

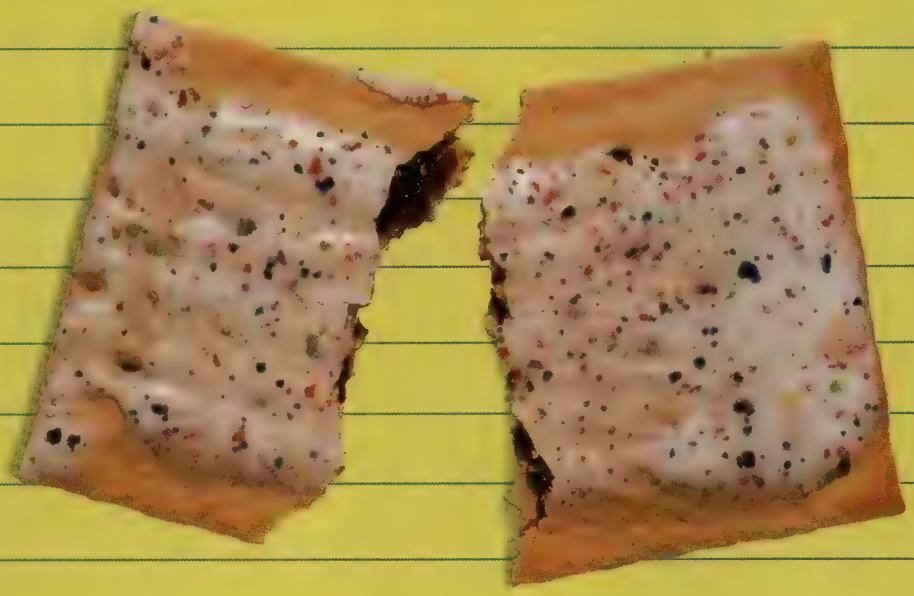
I'm a sucker for this kind of game (is there any science-fiction fan who isn't?), and have probably put in almost as many hours exploring and exploiting galaxies as I have with the historical wargames that are supposedly my specialty. Given the success of the original Macintosh *Pax Imperia*, and the comparable popularity of *Master of Orion* and *Ascendancy*, this game should appeal to a large, enthusiastic audience.

As they proved with the hugely popular *Warcraft* in 1994 and continue to prove with *Warcraft II*, Blizzard's designers have an uncommon grasp of the elements that make for addictive gaming experiences. *Pax Imperia 2* looks like a vast, deep, absorbing program, and I for one can't wait to get my hands on it.

PCG

Confessions

OF A GAME ADDICT:



Day 1: I was driving down the freeway eating a chili dog, shifting into fifth, balancing a copy of WIRED® on my lap, when the cellular rang. It was Bob from Sierra. He wanted to know if I could write reviews for a bunch of new CD games they had coming out.

I had 40 days, 15 games, and a closet full of sunflower seeds, instant coffee and Pop Tarts®.

HOW COULD I SAY NO?

Day 5: I'm not sure
Chapter 6 of Phantasmagoria

GABRIEL KNIGHT®: THE BEAST WITHIN™



The top two computer gaming magazines both named the first *Gabriel Knight* mystery the best adventure game of the year in 1994. Creator Jane Jensen might want to start dusting off her awards shelf again, as *The Beast Within* mixes a strange, new brew of mutilation murders, a centuries-old curse, and criminal misdeeds on multiple CDs.

Gabriel Knight, a detective of the supernatural, is summoned to Munich to investigate a series of murders blamed on werewolves. The edge-of-your-seat tale unfolds to implicate the mad King Ludwig II, a lost Wagner opera, and Gabriel's own dark past.

Shrewd thinking and paying attention to details are rewarded as players unravel clues while taking on the role of Gabriel and his partner, Grace Nakimura. Shot on location in Germany and the U.S. with more than 40 surprisingly talented actors, *The Beast Within* is possibly the most visually stunning, realistic adventure game to come out on CD this year. Even the photo on the box is enough to induce a minor heart palpitation.



INTERACTIVE CINEMA *The rich, realistic movie-like look of* The Beast Within *came from shooting more than 1,000 backgrounds here and in Germany.*

WIN'95 WIN DOS MAC MATURE M

PHANTA HORROR



Unless you've spent the last couple of years spelunking in Zanzibar, you've already heard of *Phantasmagoria*. Now it's finally here with all the elements of a big hit: a master story teller in the person of Kings Quest® creator Roberta Williams, feature-film quality footage, and a story so rich and elaborate it took a record-setting seven CDs to contain it all.

The tale of Don and Adrienne's bizarre discoveries about their newly-acquired mansion is told in realistic live video. No, you don't watch a movie and then click on a plot option. You run this show.

But the thrill of *Phantasmagoria* isn't simply the technology, it's also the story. As Adrienne explores her new home, its dusty secrets begin to reveal themselves. The original owner, an illusionist, died in the house after the suspicious disappearances of his



INTERACTIVE NIGHTMARE *The most film footage ever shot for a CD game lends* Phantasmagoria *the sinister qualities of a great horror feature film.*

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what's more frightening: or my face.



SMAGORIA™ ON 7 CDs

many wives. An evil force still inhabits the maze of rooms, and its effect on Don is disturbing, terrifying, and deadly.

With perseverance and wit, you can discover the clues that save Adrienne from Don, and Don from himself. This is truly the kind of game you'll find yourself staying up all night to play. And, with its decidedly macabre storyline, the middle of the night may be *Phantasmagoria's* finest hour.

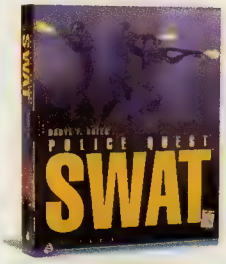




HORROR ON 7 CDS *Players control every movement of Adrienne– and this game doesn't "show" you anything. You have to find it.*

WIN'95 WIN DOS MAC MATURE M

DARYL F. GATES POLICE QUEST®: SWAT™



When he headed the L.A.P.D., Chief Daryl F. Gates founded SWAT, the first Special Weapons And Tactics team. Now these highly trained forces are the elite of law enforcement, while Gates' *Police Quest: SWAT* stands as the elite in tactical simulation games.

In this, the fifth installment of the successful *PQ* series, you join a SWAT team, take intensive training, and learn to handle advanced class 3 weaponry, like an MP5, Benelli tactical shotgun, M16 and LASH radio. After a few hours on the shooting range comes the "fun" part. That is, if you consider getting nearly blown away in a real-life crisis fun. Work with your team, make the right split-second decisions, fire accurately and you could advance through the ranks to become an Element Leader. Mess up, and it could cost you your on-screen life.

The video action was shot using actual SWAT officers at their training facilities and in the streets of L.A. to lend an unmistakable air of realism. At least some of the country's major police departments think so–they now use *Police Quest* CDs to train their officers.



DEAD-ON AUTHENTICITY Police Quest: SWAT *doesn't kid around: blow a decision, fail to communicate or mishandle your weapons and you're toast.*

WIN'95 WIN DOS MAC TEEN T

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Day 14: My family keeps bugging me. I told them, "can't

TORIN'S PASSAGE™



Leave it to Al Lowe–creator of some of the most entertaining and enduring computer games–to unleash *Torin's Passage* on the world.

In coming up with this remarkable new game, he has delivered to our CD drives an adventure game with as much intrigue and brain-twisting challenge as any hard-core gamer has ever tackled *AND* a funny, musically-rich, visual treat that takes gaming to a new level.

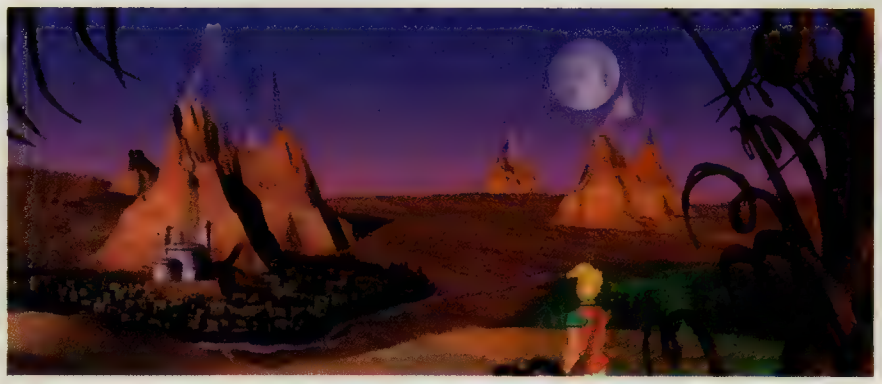
Torin's Passage is the story of a young man's encounters in the nested worlds *beneath* the surface of the planet, Strata. These bizarre lands, replete with flowing hot lava, unworldly creatures, and a host of other cunning obstacles, must be traversed if Torin is to reach his goal.

Making matters worse (for Torin, more exciting for you) is a formidable line-up of brain-teasing puzzles at the end of each chapter–all of them, double black diamond challenges.

There is one word to describe the artistry in *Torin's:* "whoa!" Multi-plane scrolling, spectacular backgrounds, and hand-drawn cel animation add a depth and realism you've never seen in a game before. The sheer talent and imagination of the artists is, by itself, worth the price of admission.

But your eyes aren't the only things that get to dip into the candy box. *Torin's* also features an original digital music score composed by three-time Oscar™ winner, Michel Legrand.

There's a pop-up TelePrompTer™ that lets you replay dialogue to listen for crucial clues, plus a 3-D interface with online hints for the less-experienced players. There was, however, one hint missing: How do you avoid work, eating, chores and sleep so you can play *Torin's Passage* endlessly?



THE WONDER DOWN UNDER *The subterranean worlds of* Torin's Passage *provides the setting for a challenging quest with brain-teasing puzzles and humor.*

WIN'95 WIN DOS MAC

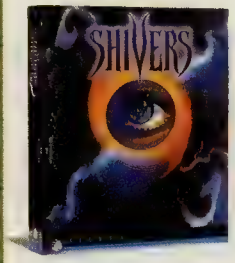


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me to let them play Torin's Passage.™

you "see" orking?"

SHIVERS™



It's amazing to think that the same computer used to balance the family checkbook can produce an even bigger scare. What's required is the addition of a terror-filled, nail-biting, spine-tingling CD like *Shivers*.

In this new game aimed at teens and adults, players must rely on their wits and raw nerve to survive a nightmarish trip through a surreal, abandoned museum. The goal is to vanquish the ghosts and phantoms that haunt the museum before they steal your life's essence.

Along the way, a series of beads-of-sweat-producing puzzles await, along with chilling moments of live-action video that delivers twists and turns in the plot.

Shivers sets a haunting stage through an eerie original music score and "as seen through your own eyes" graphics. The first-person views are handsomely rendered, you might even say "mystical." But the real draw remains the story.

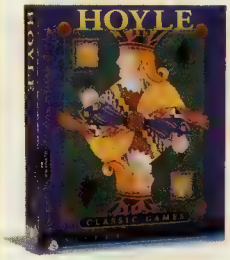
It tantalizes, draws you in, and–fittingly–gives you the shivers. This is definitely one game that will keep you glued to your seat. Or, at least, the very edge of it.



NOT HOME, NOT ALONE *Players have to spend the night on guard in search of the evil spirits that haunt a sinister, derelict museum.*

WIN'95 WIN T TEEN

HOYLE®
CLASSIC GAMES



"According to Hoyle®" means "by the rules; done the right way." This remarkably sophisticated collection of 10 favorite games lives up to its name, giving families great variety, totally accurate play action, and an interesting twist on the old idea of playing against the computer.

Sit down at the *Hoyle® Classic Games* poker table, for instance, and you play against a rogue's gallery of computerized competitors. Take on a crusty, old prospector, an over-the-hill movie star, or a number of other players, each sporting an accent and an attitude.

The more you play, the more sides you'll see to their weird, witty personalities. Add in their different card-playing styles, and you end up with a much more fun (and realistic) way to challenge the microchips to a game.

Along with five card draw, you can also play bridge, solitaire, old maid, hearts, crazy 8's, gin rummy, checkers, backgammon, and hearts. With its cast of characters and jam-packed variety, you'll definitely want to ante up for this card game.



TEN GAMES IN ONE Hoyle® Classic Games *give you ten card and board games and 10 animated competitors to outwit.*

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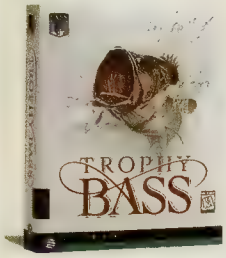
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Day 29: Today I defeated a horde of commanded a U-boat and

TROPHY BASS™



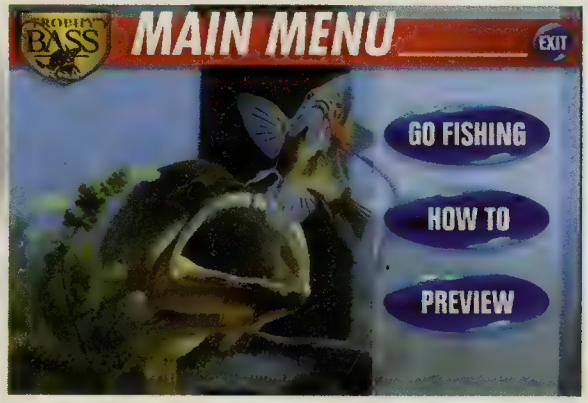
Surely you've seen them. Those guys on cable TV, sitting in a boat, reeling in a big one, saying stuff to each other like, "Oh, he's got a lot of fight in him there, Jim."

At last count, there were 50 million people in this country like Jim who love to feel the tug on a rod. And now they've got their own computer game: *Trophy Bass*.

There are three sides to *Trophy Bass*. You can choose tackle, pick your bait, read the water, set the weather conditions, and then finesse your casting technique on one of five virtual lakes. Option two is to play in Tournament Mode and try your luck against conditions and competitors dished out by the computer.

Or you can get even more serious and watch the full motion video "how-to" section and pick up more than 100 nuggets of solid advice from America's top tournament bass fishermen.

Now, obviously, the Jims of the world are going to love this game, because playing can bring you more success out on the water. But, surprisingly, you don't have to know what a lunker bucketmouth is to get a charge out of *Trophy Bass*. As Jim would say, "It's a keeper."



CAST OF THOUSANDS *The super-accurate simulation and detailed how-to information earned* Trophy Bass *the endorsement of B.A.S.S., America's largest fishing organization.*

WIN'95 WIN

CAESAR™ II



A city simulation? Hmmm, haven't I seen something like this before? Yes and no. Yes, you've seen amazingly-detailed 3D renderings before. And, yes, you've played sims that put you in the municipal driver's seat.

But, no, you've never played anything quite like *Caesar II*. For starters, if you do a good job quelling riots, dowsing fires, recruiting soldiers and building great cities, you earn approval ratings that grant you the right to take on another province.

Then it really heats up. Along with wearing your city planner hat, you get to don the general's helmet and fight off hordes of barbarians in battle sequences (check out the Carthaginians on armored elephants). With each additional province you control, the closer you get to the best hat of all: the emperor's snappy laurel wreath.

By combining great graphics, intricate strategizing and battle action, *Caesar II* isn't merely simulation. It's *stimulation* for those who hanker for action and power.



BUILT IN A DAY? *The historical accuracy and detail in* Caesar II's *cityscapes are astonishing, while battle sequences–a twist for sim games–add another layer of challenge and fun.*

WIN'95 DOS

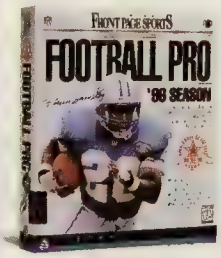
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fished for bass,

barbarians, won the playoffs,

ate six Cup Noodles®.

FRONT PAGE SPORTS®: FOOTBALL PRO '96™



When *Football Pro '95* was hailed as "the best football game on the planet," you'd think Sierra would send in the third string and retire to the locker room for a tall, frosty one. But, no. They put the pads back on, threw out the old playbook, and came back with *Football Pro '96*.

It keeps all the things that earned its forefathers the Best Sports Simulation award three years running: Slavish attention to real NFL player and team stats, a play book with over 10,000 combinations of X's and O's, and league play over CompuServe.

Ah, but that's the old stuff. For 1996, you can suit up as a player for an arcade game or appoint yourself coach for the football sim. What's more, 3D animations were created using films of actual players shot from dozens of angles simultaneously, so tailbacks juke, wide receivers sprint, and linemen grunt just like their real-life counterparts. The awesome realism of this new version is sure to earn some accolades. "Best football game in the solar system?" Could be.



THIS IS NOT TV *The "motion capture" based 3D animation will have you think you've tuned in to the NFL game of the week. But this is better: No commercials.*

WIN'95 DOS KIDS TO ADULTS K-A

COMMAND: ACES OF THE DEEP®

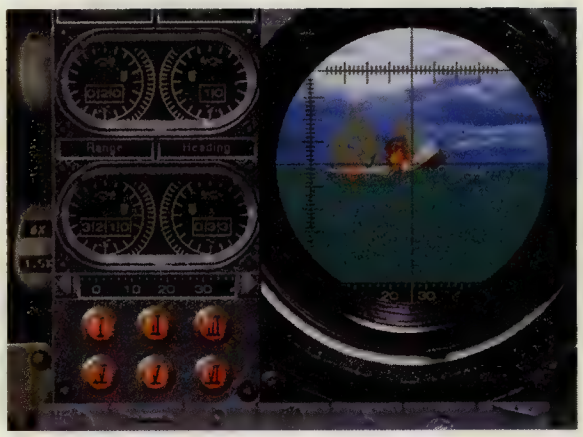


Now hear this. All personnel who want to see how the Simulation Game of the Year has been improved, report to your software dealer. *COMMAND: Aces of the Deep,* with its incredible realism and historical accuracy, has taken a giant leap forward with the addition of phenomenal texture-mapped graphics and voice activation.

With Windows® 95 and IBM VoiceType®, you bark commands at your U-boat crew and watch them respond to your orders to dive, surface, fire torpedoes, and more. While you don't need the voice command option to play the game, it adds yet another dimension to the realism.

VOICE COMMAND OPTION · IBM TECHNOLOGY

Your strategic skills get a sweat-producing workout in the cat-and-mouse pursuit sequences, while a new two-mode deck gun lets you play a more arcade-style game. Here, you get to do to other ships what *COMMAND* has done to other simulation games: Blow them out of the water.



DIVE! DIVE! *Shout out the orders, and your crew reacts on the double in the first voice-activated CD-ROM simulation game ever.*

IBM VoiceType is a registered trademark of IBM Corporation.

WIN'95 NATIVE KIDS TO ADULTS K-A

ENTER TO WIN AN IBM APTIVA. Call 1 800 757 7707, surf http://www.sierra.com, or log on at AOL or CompuServe.

Day 27: It took 3 but I finally reached Level Not every

3-D ULTRA PINBALL™



The pinball wizards at Sierra have just come up with a better idea on how to stick five vertical feet of pinball machine onto seven inches of computer screen. While most other pinball games show you the table as if it were shot pointing straight up, Sierra's *3-D Ultra Pinball* slants the table so you can see the whole thing easily without scrolling. This bit of cleverness was then totally exploited with the most amazing spacescape graphics to appear this side of Alpha Centauri.

Another innovation: *3-D Ultra Pinball* uses advanced physics formulas to give you an uncannily accurate feel of a real table. Thanks to genius programming from some people who weren't sleeping during Physics class, flipper responsiveness, table bumping, ball rolling and ricochets look and react just like an authentic tavern machine. It even tilts like classic pinball. Damn!

The game's three tables can be interconnected so you can keep going until the sun comes up. And action on all versions is super fast; an amazing feat especially for a Windows® game. If there's one downside to this addictive game, it may be that the garbage isn't going to get taken out for a while, and the dog may have to start walking himself.



FAST AND FURIOUS *The full dimensional graphics of* 3-D Ultra Pinball *haven't slowed things down. Action is fast, frenzied, and richly animated.*

WIN'95 WIN MAC

THE



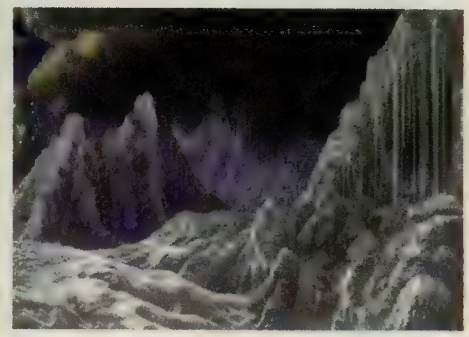
Now that the Windows® 95 frenzy is going full tilt, you may wonder, "is there a game specifically designed for this amazingly cool new operating system that takes full advantage of its multi-threading capabilities?" Or perhaps you'd like to know, "is there a game so incredibly wicked that it will actually increase my supply of testosterone?"



The answer to both questions: Yes. And you're looking at it.

Thexder flies, runs, jumps, morphs into a tank or plane, and blasts his way through five worlds, each with ten different levels of increasing hair-pulling difficulty.

Your job in all this is to help *Thexder* work his way through mind-numbing mazes while steering clear of energy fields, sheer drop offs, and other assorted game-enders. Then, in addition to robots, aliens, cyborgs and other



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solid days,
10 of Thexder.
member of the family jumped for joy.



XDER®

enemies, *Thexder* also has to contend with burning lava, crushing ceilings, and unpredictable explosives.

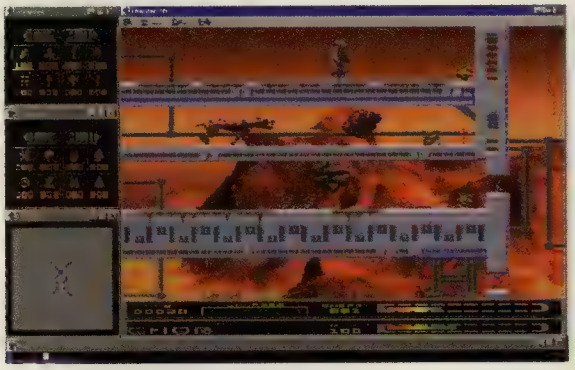
Thanks to your droid-fast reflexes, and *Thexder's* ability to morph, you can struggle your way to the 50th level to face Primus Tech, the numero uno enemy. Actually, there are other enemies you can take on: the bad dudes you play against on your network or your modem.

All this battling is supercharged courtesy of Windows® 95. Along with the main horizontally-scrolling action window, there are five additional screens to keep you filled in on your position, available equipment, enemies and weapons. Due to that multi-threading business,



every screen is constantly updated without slowing down the main action one hair.

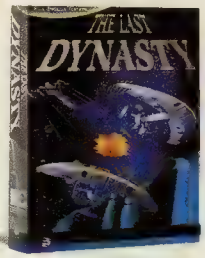
Thexder–sure to be one of the season's best sellers–has arrived, pumped on Windows® 95 steroids, and ready to do some serious damage.



LIKE A MALL MOVIE THEATRE *The five screens of* Thexder *churn out loads of info and action simultaneously. It's all made possible by the only game to take advantage of the multi-threading abilities of Windows® 95.*

WIN'95 NATIVE TEEN T

LAST DYNASTY™



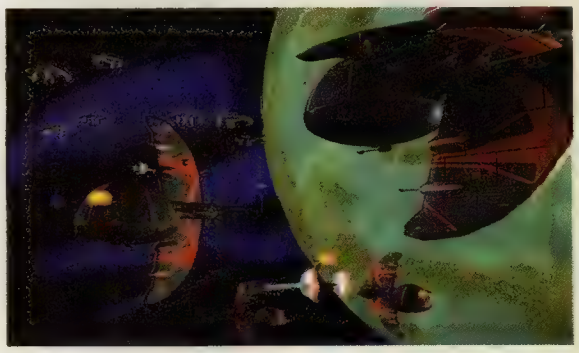
Last Dynasty isn't the best new game to come along in a while. It's more like two of the best.

Start by parking yourself in its first-person, full-view, real-time combat simulator. The completely customizable cockpit, with continuous on-line help, locks on and destroys typical space fight games. The information overload as you plan an attack, while your radar and windshield fills with enemy ships, is truly stomach-churning. Then comes an even cooler part: You can grab a momentary breath during all this chaos by switching into strategy mode, where you can map out and execute your next attack from a mega-choice of battle strategies.

Carrying the action game forward are spectacular interactive cinema clips, haunting original music, and enough mind-racking tension to have you sweating an arsenal worth of bullets.

While the action side of this equation beats most pure space arcade CDs at their own game, *Last Dynasty* shines again in the fully-rendered, high res scenes in the adventure portion of the game. From a first-person angle you explore, look for clues, remove a few ruthless strangers, and keep your nerve endings on alert-mode in wait for a surprise attack.

Consider *Last Dynasty* as an excellent, addictive, warp speed, mysterious, challenging, over-stim'd value.



DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE *If you can't make up your mind between the action overload of a space fight, or the brain tease of an adventure game,* Last Dynasty *gives you both.*

WIN'95 WIN TEEN T

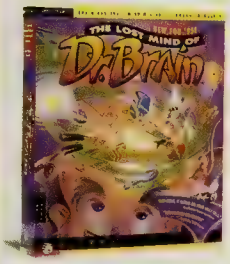
ENTER TO WIN AN IBM APTIVA. Call 1 800 757 7707, surf http://www.sierra.com, or log on at AOL or CompuServe



Day 39: Help! My reviews are due tomorrow and I'm stuck in Mary, Mary Quite Contrary's garden.

Where's my 4-year old?

THE LOST MIND OF DR. BRAIN™



You have to love something that makes your kids smarter, keeps them happily occupied for hours, and *isn't* TV. In this case, that something is *The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain.*

This third installment in the immensely popular *Dr. Brain* series gives kids 10 different wildly entertaining puzzles to solve–each challenging the 10 learning centers in real live kid brains. Some involve mazes, others memory games, and there's plenty of fun with words and music. Since you can set the degree of difficulty, both ten-year olds and teens can have their brains put to the test.

But here's the real truth. These puzzles are also a blast for those of us who, ahem, haven't doodled on a Pee Chee for many moons. (My favorite: sending the right colored balls down the railroad track maze to the station.)

So don't get the idea this is some stuffy, bookish "learning aid." The puzzles are pure fun, surprisingly funny, and always a challenge. If you've got kids, buying *The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain* is clearly a no brainer.



BRAIN CENTRAL *There's an object to this game: Help restore* Dr. Brain's *brain which he accidentally transferred to his rodent assistant, Rathbone.*

WIN'95 WIN MAC

MIXED-UP MOTHER GOOSE® DELUXE



The list of the awards *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* has won from magazines, parents' groups and the software industry could fill up the rest of this page. And no wonder. Here is a game that has introduced more than 500,000 little ones to the computer, while helping build their problem-solving and learning skills.

Sounds like a textbook? It's not. In the new deluxe version of *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* kids search through Mother Goose Land to find missing objects from classic rhymes. A successful recovery is rewarded with a song–but not like you've ever heard before. Imagine "Little Jack Horner" done in reggae and you'll get the idea.

The game can be played in English or Spanish, and there's a free bonus audio CD of the 18 songs in the game so kids can sing along after you've commandeered the computer so you can play your games.



TAKE A GANDER *Mother Goose Land is laid out in beautiful, hand-painted graphics, with dozens of places for kids to explore.*

WIN'95 WIN MAC

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Product Information Number 208

Day 41: Fried my computer. Entered Sierra Sweepstakes to win an IBM® Aptiva "Ultimate Gamer."

We're giving away five IBM Aptiva "Ultimate Gamer" systems with Pentium® 133 Mhz processor, 16 MB RAM, 3.4 GB HF, Six Speed CD-ROM, 16-Bit Wavetable sound, 3-D graphics card, 2 stereo speakers with sub-woofer, and a 17" SVGA monitor (15.7" viewable image size). You want? Option A: Scour all 10 pages of the Sierra ad, answer the questions below, send the card back to us by February 14, 1996 and pray mightily to the game gods. Option B: Buy your own by calling IBM PC Direct at 1-800-IBM-2-YOU.



Which Sierra game comes with 7 CD-ROMs? _____

Which Sierra game takes place in an abandoned museum? _____

Which Sierra game visits subterranean worlds? _____

Which Sierra game features voice activation? _____

Name _____

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No purchase necessary. Offer good in USA only. Sweepstakes is open to residents of the US over 18 years of age. You may use this card or enter on a plain 3x5-inch card. All federal, state and local laws apply. Taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. Decisions of the judges are final and binding. Offer void where prohibited by law. Employees and family members of Sierra On-Line or IBM Corporation are not eligible. Odds of winning depend upon number of entries received. Only one answer per question, one entry per household.

Entries will be randomly selected and answers verified for correctness to identify and select winners. Winners will be selected February 15, 1996. Grand Prizes will be shipped to winners at address shown on entry form. Total approximate value of Grand Prize is $5,000 each. Winner cannot transfer prize. Prize is not redeemable for cash.

Each winner will be required to sign a release allowing Sierra to use his or her name and likeness in advertising.

Winners will be announced on Sierra forums on-line and in Spring issue of InterAction. For a list of winners, available 90 days after Sweepstake drawing, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Winners List c/o Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 53210, Bellevue, WA 98015-3210.

IBM **Aptiva.**

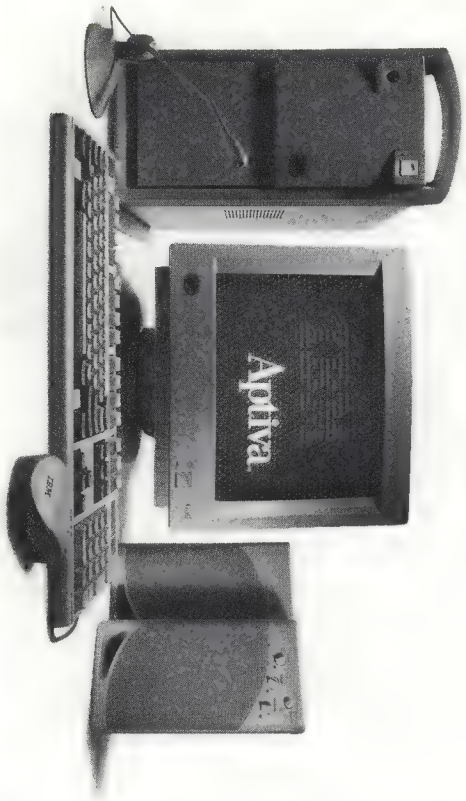
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Day 48: Bought two Sierra games, got a third free*. Free game was actually not junk.

Hard to believe, but there are even more Sierra games than we could squeeze into this ad. So check them all out by going to the place where you like to buy games or call 1-800-757-7707 and order directly from Sierra. Then, when you buy any two games from the list below between November 1, 1995 and January 31, 1996, you can select one more from the other side of this card and we'll send it to you for free.

- ❑ Adi's Comprehensive Learning System
- ❑ Caesar II
- ❑ COMMAND: Aces of the Deep
- ❑ Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96
- ❑ Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within
- ❑ Hoyle® Classic Games
- ❑ Kings Quest VII, 2.0
- ❑ Last Dynasty
- ❑ Lode Runner On-Line
- ❑ Lost Mind of Dr. Brain
- ❑ Mixed-Up Mother Goose Deluxe
- ❑ Outpost 1.5
- ❑ Phantasmagoria
- ❑ Police Quest: SWAT
- ❑ Print Artist 3.0
- ❑ Shivers
- ❑ Space Quest 6
- ❑ Thexder
- ❑ 3-D Ultra Pinball
- ❑ The Incredible Machine 3.0
- ❑ Torin's Passage
- ❑ Trophy Bass

* Well, OK, free plus $5.95 for postage and handling.



Please tape closed (No staples)

Fold along this line.

CSA060

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Buy two Sierra games, get a third game free.*

Check the box in front of your free game from the list below and mail this card with your check or money order made out to Sierra On-Line for $5.95 for postage and handling, dated receipts and proofs of purchase from both games (the UPC bar code from the cartons) to:

Sierra Buy 2 Get 1 Free Offer
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You can also take advantage of this offer by ordering directly from Sierra at 1-800-757-7707 24 hours a day.

- ❑ Berlitz Spanish
- ❑ Casino Deluxe
- ❑ Castle of Dr. Brain
- ❑ Front Page Sports: Baseball '94
- ❑ Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers
- ❑ Hoyle's® Classic Card Games
- ❑ Incredible Toon Machine
- ❑ LandDesigner
- ❑ Leisure Suit Larry 6
- ❑ Leisure Suit Larry Collection
- ❑ Lode Runner: The Legend Returns
- ❑ MetalTech: EarthSiege
- ❑ PowerHouse
- ❑ Red Baron w/ Mission Builder
- ❑ Space Quest Collection
- ❑ Talking Tutor: Alphabet Blocks
- ❑ Talking Tutor: Beginning Reading
- ❑ Talking Tutor: Early Math
- ❑ Talking Tutor: Kid's Typing
- ❑ Talking Tutor: Spelling Blizzard
- ❑ Woodruff and the Schnibble

SHIP MY FREE GAME TO:

Name _____

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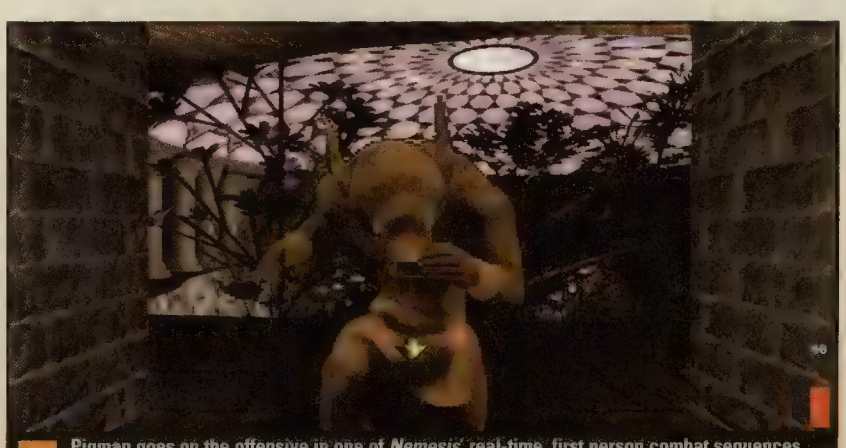
Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Offer valid in the U.S. and Canada only. Not valid with any other offer. Requests must be postmarked by February 15, 1996. This offer may be discontinued without notice. Sierra reserves the right to limit quantities. No dealers, please. CSA060

Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure

Sir-tech returns to its roots with a new angle on a RPG legend

The people who helped create computer role-playing games return to the world that made them famous — and it's Wizardry like you've never seen it before.

— T. Liam McDonald



Pigman goes on the offensive in one of *Nemesis*' real-time, first person combat sequences. The world and creatures are entirely new and weren't taken from previous Wizardry games.

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure
Developer: Sir-tech
Publisher: Sir-tech, Ogdensburg Business Center, PO Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669, (315) 393-6633
Projected Price: n/a
Amount Done: 80%

In a nutshell:

Combine real-time combat, adventure gaming, and roleplaying, and you have a whole new type of Wizardry game.

What's so special?

This combination of elements has never really been tried before, and if the game plays half as good as it looks, it'll be a landmark.

Why should I care?

Sir-tech has solid chops for class-A gaming, and *Wizardry* is the granddaddy of RPGs, so you can expect something pretty entertaining.

And when's it coming out?

March 1996

It's been more than three years since the name "Wizardry" last appeared on a new game, with *Crusaders of the Dark Savant*. Those three years have seen amazing growth and upheavals in the gaming industry that Norm and Rob Sirotek, heads of Sir-tech software, helped create. Publisher of the first big computer roleplaying games, Sir-tech has stayed an independent entity while other small publishers were swallowed up by larger companies. And now, with a new team of developers capable of meeting the high technological demands of new games, they're ready to start making cutting-edge games again. Hot on the heels of *Jagged Alliance* and the award-winning *Realms of Arkania* titles, Sir-tech is back with *Nemesis*, a whole new type of Wizardry adventure.

Long-time roleplaying gamers are already arching their eyebrows and muttering beneath their breath: a *Wizardry adventure*? Has Sir-tech gone soft? Is the dense, complex play of past Wizardry games past being supplanted with a fuzzy-bunny, user-friendly adventure games a la *Myst*?

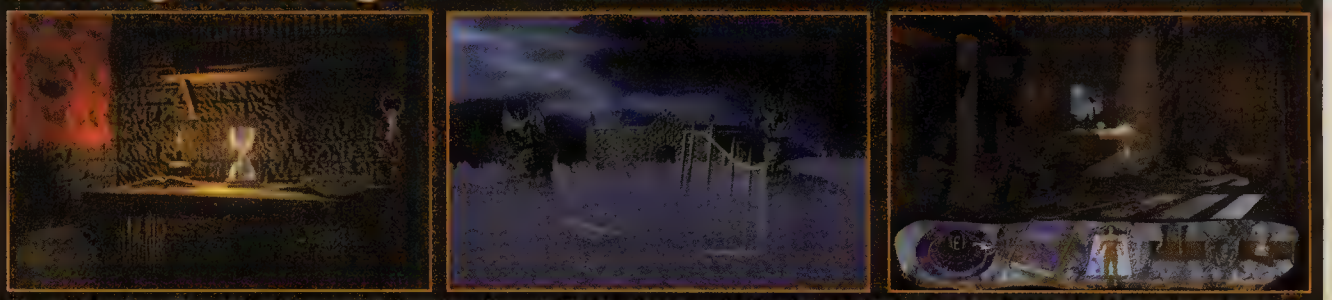
Rest assured, the Siroteks have no intention of abandoning their loyal, hard-core gaming market. *Wizardry 8* is in the works, and will have all the elements — multi-character parties, phased combat, complex characters and story lines — that made the series great. But more non-gamers are getting computers and looking for entertainment, and the cries for a first-person, real-time combat Wizardry game could no longer go unanswered. And so we come to *Nemesis*, the brainchild of Norm and Rob's younger sister, Linda Currie.

When Currie was in high-school, her older brothers were creating some of the first computer roleplaying games, and Currie quickly became the house expert on *Wizardry*. She played through the entire series and learned them inside-out, becoming Sir-tech's best source for helping people out of sticky Wizardry situations. After working for Sharp Electronics for a time, she came back as a producer for Sir-tech, heading up *Jagged Alliance* and, in the process, marrying lead designer Ian Currie. Once



The highly customizable interface gives you a wide range of combat and spell-casting options during fights.

Setting the Stage



Sir-tech's background rendering is impressive throughout *Nemesis*. The developers worked hard to make the pre-rendered scenes look three-dimensional.

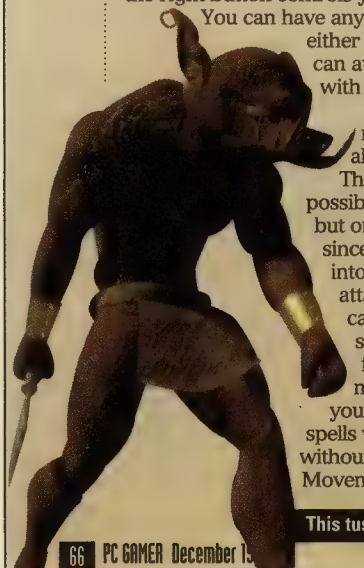
Sir-tech started building a new in-house development team to keep pace with the increasing technological demands of the new market, Linda began work on a new type of fantasy game: *Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure*.

"We wanted this game not to be intimidating or complex," Currie says, "with an easily figured-out interface. It's a cross between an adventure game and an RPG, and it probably will feel more adventure-like. One of the things we found was missing in a lot of games like *Myst* is interaction. There were no other people, no creatures, no conflict, and those were the elements we'd like to see in a game."

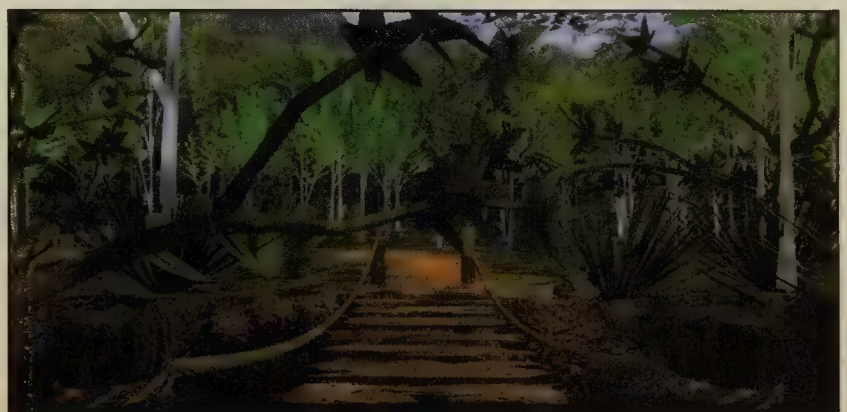
Toward this end, they divided the game into several separate elements: combat, puzzles, exploration, narrative movies, and NPC interaction. As Currie points out, "We want to have all these elements molded together into a single game, so that it offers the enjoyment of adventure but the conflict of a combat game. We also wanted to introduce real-time combat, but we wanted it finessed enough so that you a had a chance for something more than *click-click-click*. We wanted some strategy in terms of what weapons you would use and what approach you would take. The combat also has to take place slowly enough so that if you saw a creature attacking high and to the left, you could block that."

The result is a game that's *Myst*-like in its graphical look, but more complex in terms of play. The interface is simple: the left mouse button controls your left hand, the right button controls your right hand. You can have any weapon in either hand, so you can attack or defend with either hand.

The game's magic system is also very simple. There are sixteen possible spell effects, but only eight icons, since each spell falls into either the attack or defense category. To cast spells, you keep a focusing talisman in hand, and you can change spells very quickly without a time penalty. Movement through the game world is step-based, but a scaling technology is being created so the perspective can scroll smoothly instead of stepping.



This tusked Pigman is a favorite monster around the Sir-tech offices.



On your quest to uncover the secret of the Nithos Shadow, you must explore an entire world. Your mission will even take you out into the great outdoors.

All the creatures you encounter move in real-time, which made meshing the stepping movement and real-time engine tricky. Sir-tech's designers had to work hard to make the two-dimensional, pre-rendered scenes look three-dimensional. Using scaling, shadows, and other tricks, however, they've managed to create an elaborate gaming environment that effectively blends real-time action with pre-rendered scenes.

In *Nemesis*, you play a lone adventurer in a world facing a dire threat from something called the Nithos Shadow. This shadow is the offspring of some ancient magic that is once again emerging, and for reasons that are not exactly clear, it's targeting you for attack. Rian, a sage in the high council of the city of Galican, sends you on a quest to uncover the secret of the shadow and stop it. This force is part of an of an ancient power discovered long ago by a society known as Nithera. The Nitherin Mages were not evil people, but as they tapped into this unknown power, they eventually lost control of it and were annihilated. All that remained were seven magical talismans, which have resurfaced throughout the ages, with destructive results.

Your quest is to locate the talismans and deal with the threat, making sure that it never resurfaces in the future. Along the way, you encounter a variety of friends and foes (and you won't always know which is which). You also have to learn why this force is targeting you, and what your link is to the Nitherin Mages.



The "Fire" spell is one of sixteen that can be cast during gameplay.

Gameplay itself involves a number of different aspects: There are item-related puzzles, character interaction, traps, and combat with various foes and creatures. And although, as Currie points out, the size of the worlds you travel through are "not that vast, there's always enough happening and lots of things to do."

But what makes it a *Wizardry* adventure? "No, it does *not* share a common world or creatures with the other games. What it does have is the qualities that *Wizardry* stands for: an epic story, intrigue, mystery, and arsenals of unique items. It also goes in a new direction." *Nemesis* stands to introduce a whole new range of people to the *Wizardry* name, people who didn't even have PCs when the most recent titles were released. Such an accessible and entertaining game may help people crossover to the more complex roleplaying games. Who knows? It may be just the thing a sagging RPG market needs to revitalize itself for a new audience.

PCG

SONY

PlayStation™

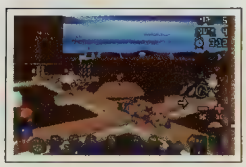
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Lemmings™







BE AN INDIVIDUAL. JOIN THE MASSES

COMING OCTOBER 27th

Take a trip into the third dimension with the suicidal superstars from the craziest puzzle game around! Explore fully texture mapped, real-time 3D environments packed with lunatic Lemming action. Test your wits against this all-new brain teaser – it's the most fun you can have rescuing rodents!

KIDS TO ADULTS

K-A

AGES 6+

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Product Information Number 220

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LIMITED COLLE

A stellar collection of rare STAR TREK memorabilia,

Have you ever wished you could talk to Gene Roddenberry? Now you've got the chance. Just take a seat in the captain's chair and Roddenberry joins you on-screen for an interactive, Quicktime™ interview. He'll reveal the answers to a galaxy of intriguing questions as he shares his vision and his genius. This up close and personal interview, never before been seen in the U.S., is a must for all serious collectors!



VISIONARY

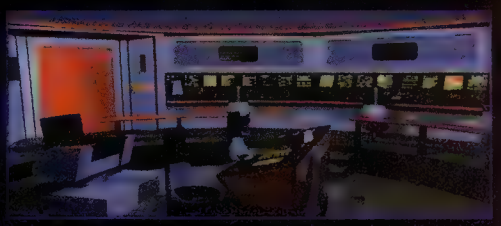
Leonard Nimoy hosts this multimedia Collector's Edition and narrates the Full-motion video "Making of STAR TREK: Judgment Rites." This behind-the-scenes look offers a unique and fascinating opportunity to witness the evolution of this epic CD-ROM adventure game.

In addition, sitting in Spock's chair will activate an all new interview, also previously unseen in the U.S. Using an interactive format, you ask all the questions and Leonard Nimoy has all the answers...just as you'd expect from the venerable Vulcan.



STORYTELLER

The five year mission continues with eight STAR TREK: Judgment Rites episodes. This time you are in command. But, there is one problem — you are being watched. By whom and by what you do not know.



EPIC

Even Spock can not accurately process these strange occurrences. Is that truly an ancient WWI triplane heading straight for you at Warp 9 speed? Could it be Trelane? How could your sensors suddenly report life forms on a dead planet? Where did that primitive race get such advanced technology? It couldn't be Dr. Bredell and the Vardaines...or could it?

Game play is enhanced with 2 CD-ROMs full of dramatic, highly-rendered cinematic sequences and the actual voices of the entire, original STAR TREK crew. Brilliant 3D explosions, convincing deep space encounters, and for the first time, the actual voice

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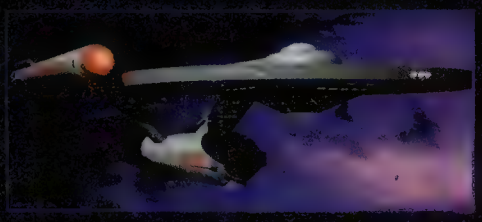
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DGMENT RITES
CTOR'S EDITION

packaged with a spectacular CD-ROM adventure game.

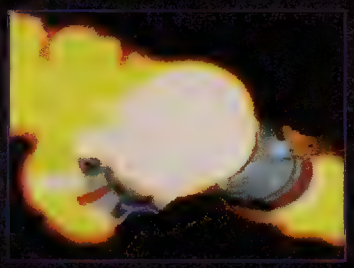
CINEMATIC

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Scotty™, Sulu™, Checkov™ and Uhura™, you'll swear you've been beamed into the continuation of the original five-year mission.

STAR TREK: Judgment Rites Limited Collector's Edition is a multimedia treasure for any STAR TREK fan or adventure game enthusiast. In addition to the Roddenberry and Nimoy interviews and best of other rare or unseen memorabilia, we've included a copy of the most popular episode of the STAR TREK TV series, "City on the Edge of Forever," co-starring Joan Collins.



And, as an extra bonus, you'll get one of our eight original STAR TREK: Judgment Rites cloisonne pins. These bold and colorful pins are custom designed and produced, in a limited run, exclusively for the Collector's Edition. You won't find them anywhere else!

STAR TREK: Judgment Rites Limited Collector's Edition is more than a unique and original multimedia presentation — it is a part of the continuing legacy from the greatest epic adventure of our lifetime. Don't miss your chance to own a piece of STAR TREK history!

TREASURES



Actual design of cloisonne pin may vary.

JRPI

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Forte the way in

Product Information Number 134

WE'VE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT'S NOT LOOKING GOOD FOR YOUR HONDA.

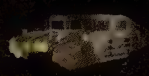
You've heard about defensive driving. Forget it. This is offensive driving. If someone gets in your way, take them out with a burst of machine gun fire. And if that doesn't work, a Sidewinder missile could be more persuasive. Welcome to the world of Zone Raiders. And you thought your commute was tough.





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ZONE RAIDERS



How's my driving? Dial 1-800-Eat Lead.



One part Ferrari. 5 parts Sherman tank.



Apparently, nuclear bombs cause mutations in cars, too.

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Product Information Number 258

Wooden Ships and Iron Men

Keep an eye out for Lord Nelson, will ya, matey?

It's been almost ten years since anyone's published an age-of-sail wargame — but here's one that could hit with the impact of a broadside of grapeshot.

— William R. Trotter

Remember those great ship-vs.-ship duels in *The Sea Hawk, Captain Blood,* and *John Paul Jones*? The tension as the ships maneuvered for range and advantage? The shirtless gun crews, fuses lit, bending tensely over their cannon? The crash of that first broadside? The stabbing muzzle-flames and rolling banks of smoke? The excitement of watching the enemy's hull splinter, his sails shred, his masts shatter and crash to the deck, trailing tattered canvas, like some huge, mortally wounded albatross?

Given such visual drama, one wonders why a whole decade had to pass before a new age-of-sail PC wargame appeared (I do not count games such as *Pirates!* or *Uncharted Waters,* in which nautical combat plays only an incidental part).

I suspect the reasons were partly technological — only now have PC graphics become sophisticated enough to rival the visual excitement of the classic movies cited above — and partly due to marketing perceptions. Wouldn't such a game appeal only to a small, specialized audience?

Not necessarily. C.S. Forrester's classic "Hornblower" novels have never gone out of print in more than half a century, and his contemporary successors — Dewey Lambdin and Patrick O'Brien — regularly land on the best-seller lists. The romance of those stirring days is as timeless as the appeal of the Arthurian myths.

"When we'd completed *Fifth Fleet* for Avalon Hill and were discussing our next project," recalled Mike Inella of Stanley Associates, "I got very excited



Wooden Ships and Iron Men recreates history's most stirring naval battles.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Wooden Ships and Iron Men
Developer: Stanley Associates, Inc., 300 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 684-1125
Projected price: TBA
Percentage complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

This PC conversion of a classic Avalon Hill game lets you recreate some of history's classic ship-to-ship duels and practice a fascinating but arcane variety of tactics.

What's so special?

There hasn't been a game devoted to this subject since *The Ancient Art of War at Sea,* published in *four-color* CGA graphics almost a decade ago — in PC terms, that really *is* ancient. Fans of the Nelsonian era have had to make do with board games and a lot of imagination.

Why should I care?

Has there ever been a more beautiful instrument of war than a ship-of-the-line under full sail? Has there ever been an era of warfare whose basic brutality was more clothed in romantic legend? Wouldn't it be a helluva rush to fire a broadside of chain-shot and see the enemy's mainmast come crashing down like a chain-sawed redwood?

And when's it coming out?

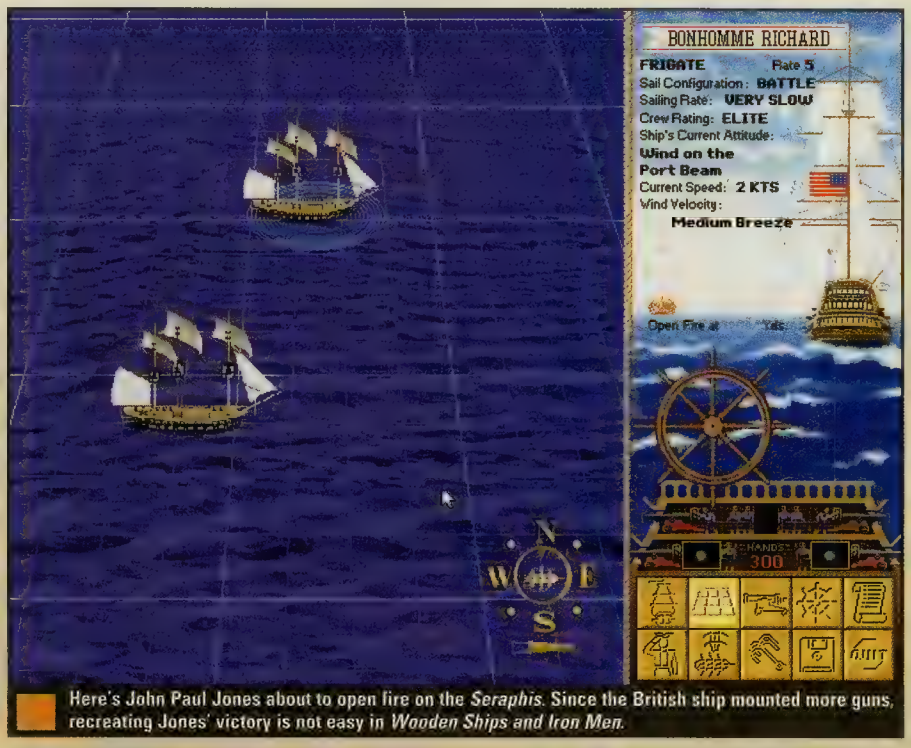
Winter 1995



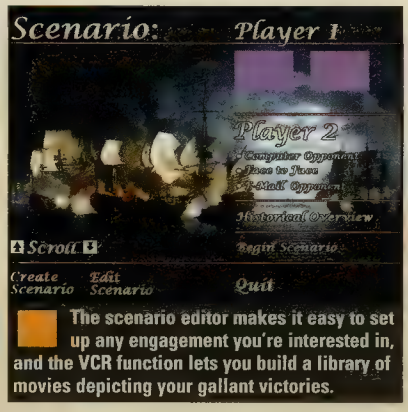
Graphics are gorgeous in *Wooden Ships and Iron Men,* and realism is enhanced by skilled use of perspective.

"Despite the brutality of shipboard life in those days, there's an incredible swashbuckling romantic appeal to the subject."

— Mike Inella, Stanley Associates



Here's John Paul Jones about to open fire on the *Seraphis*. Since the British ship mounted more guns, recreating Jones' victory is not easy in *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*.



The scenario editor makes it easy to set up any engagement you're interested in, and the VCR function lets you build a library of movies depicting your gallant victories.



Relive the exploits of naval heroes from several countries — many of the scenarios are devoted to battles that are not well known, but are just as dramatic as the famous engagements.

about the chance to do *Wooden Ships*. It's a great board game, to be sure, but I thought we could do a PC treatment that completely eliminated any feeling of counting hexes. We want the player to feel like he's really in these battles; that's one reason why we used the very unorthodox true-perspective technique in the graphics."

The heart of *WSIM* is the powerful scenario builder, which allows you to swiftly recreate *any* of the great historic duels, or to construct engagements of your own devising. Victorious captains will especially appreciate the VCR feature, which saves entire battles in the form of movies, so you can replay them to your heart's content. Losing captains will appreciate the added feature that allows you to "jump back in" and take command at any point in the battle — just in case you turned to port at the wrong moment or waited just a few seconds too long to unleash that broadside.

In the campaign mode, you assume command of an American ship at the start of the War of 1812 and take her out on a cruise. The game's a bit like *Silent Service* in this mode, since there will be days when nothing happens and your logbook entry will be terse: "Wind from the North. Exercised men on deck. No sails sighted."

On other days, you may intercept a valuable merchantman, or fight a duel with a British frigate. In combat, there are plenty of decisions: take men off the guns and send them aloft, in order to gain more maneuverability? Try to hold fire until you're within chain-shot range, or open up at 1500 yards and hope your solid-shot takes out a mast? Form a boarding party?

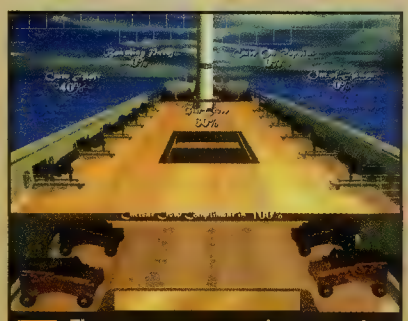
Combat graphics rival the battle scenes in those classic movies: great rolling clouds of smoke, forests of waterspouts, clouds of splinters, holes in the sails ... all the right stuff, all rendered very realistically in terms of color, perspective, and detail.

Fans of this historic era are going to love this game. Mike Inella summed up its appeal very aptly: "Despite the brutality of shipboard life in those days, there's an incredible swashbuckling romantic appeal to the subject. Just think of all the great, ringing phrases: 'Don't give up the ship!,' or 'I have not yet begun to fight!.'

"In every one of those battles, you had skilled, determined, men on both sides, whose very honor was at stake. Ironically, if you set up the *Seraphis/Bonhomme Richard* scenario in the game, John Paul Jones almost always loses. But his iron determination *not to lose his ship* tipped the balance, despite the odds. We've tried to incorporate that heroic quality into the game."

From what I've seen of the Alpha version, *Wooden Ships* promises to be a heroic game indeed.

PCG



The crew status screen lets you assign men to the sails, to repair duties, or to boarding parties.

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Product Information Number 183

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It seems that not everyone is if you don't wear a navy blue rescue a houseful of teenagers from a bunch of sickoid vampires who do indescribably mistakes can prove to be quite ugly. See for yourself. (And get "Dangerous Games," purchase.) And while we're not arguing, we think some congressmen might benefit from

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suit and bifocals, you will be. After all, you'll be helping Dana Plato



disgusting things to their victims. It's not an easy mission. And your



the documentary of the Night Trap controversy, on CD-ROM free with



a second look too. (It might even keep some of them out of trouble.)

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Product Information Number 248

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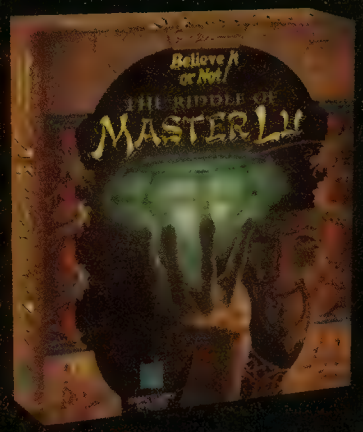
THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU

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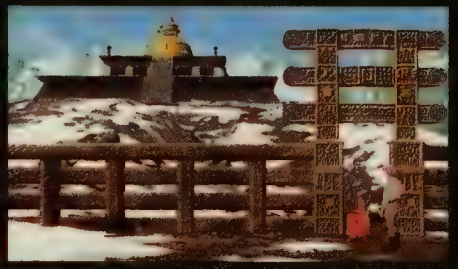
"...one of those seemingly rare adventure games that manages to merge both graphics and story..." — *Strategy Plus*

"Exotic locales, cliff-hanging situations, fast-paced storytelling, fascinating characters, diabolical puzzles. The Riddle of Master Lu seems to have it all." — *PC Gamer*









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Product Information Number 203

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AURA SYSTEMS, INC.

Product Information Number 95

Playing with Power

NEC introduces the Ready PowerPlayer LE, a multimedia PC that's built just for gamers — and it's a real scorcher

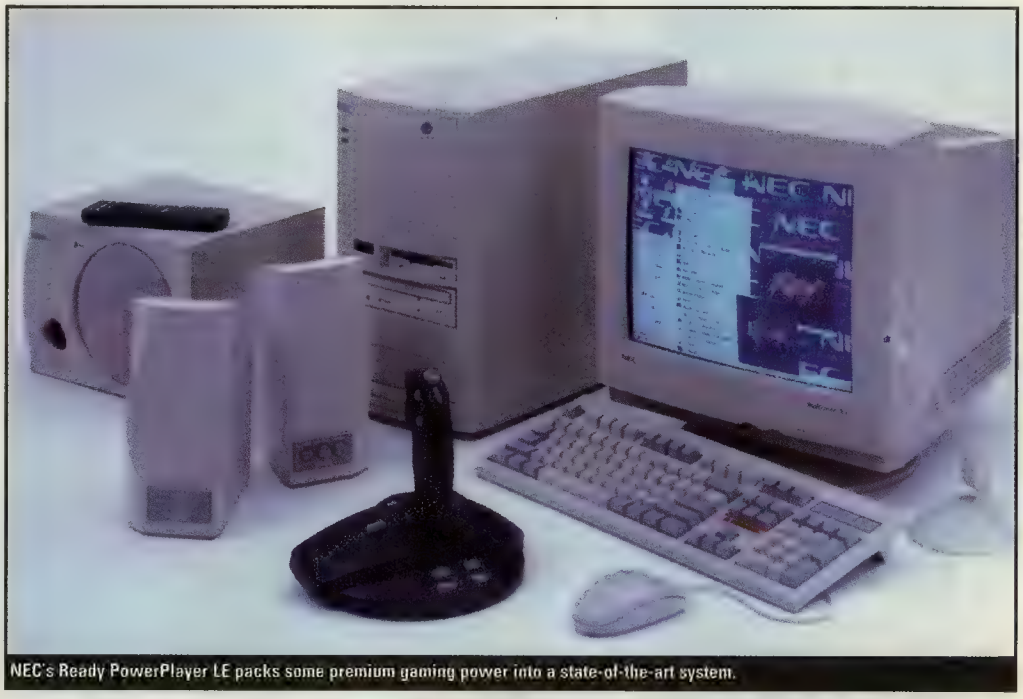
If this ain't a sign of the increasing importance of PC gaming to the computer industry, we don't know what is: NEC, one of the biggest manufacturers of PCs and peripherals in the world, is now shipping an blazing-fast, full-featured computer aimed specifically at gamers.

The new machine, called the Ready PowerPlayer LE, went on sale in a limited test of 5,000 units in early November. If those sell well — and NEC is confident they will — the new machine will hit the shelves nation-wide in 1996, with a street price of just over $3,000.

"The Ready PowerPlayer LE is an ideal combination of power and performance that lets users balance work and fun," said Murali Dharan, NEC's vice president of marketing for consumer PCs. "Who says you can't have your cake and eat it, too?"

The PowerPlayer LE system is a mix of some of the hottest hardware a hard-core PC gamer could want. At press time, the system included all these features:

- A 133MHz Pentium processor
- A 256K Level 2 cache
- A 1.6 GB hard drive
- 16MB RAM
- A 6-speed CD-ROM drive
- A 64-bit PCI local-bus graphics card with 2MB Video DRAM
- A 28.8Kbps modem with Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data and a full-duplex speakerphone
- A 16-bit sound card with 3D surround sound and wavetable synthesis
- A Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro digital joystick
- A pair of Yamaha 10-watt speakers
- A 25-watt subwoofer
- A hand-held remote for controlling multimedia
- A mouse
- A microphone



NEC's Ready PowerPlayer LE packs some premium gaming power into a state-of-the-art system.

NEC is planning to include a software bundle with the PowerPlayer LE system that will contain the following:

- Microsoft Windows 95
- Microsoft Works 95
- Intuit Quicken
- MidiSoft MediaWorks
- Netscape Navigator
- America Online, CompuServe, Microsoft Network, and Prodigy communications software
- *Mechwarrior 2*
- *Shanghai: Greatest Moments*
- *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*
- *Fury³*
- *Buried in Time*
- *NASCAR Racing*
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- *Descent*
- *Silent Steel*
- *Magic Carpet Plus*
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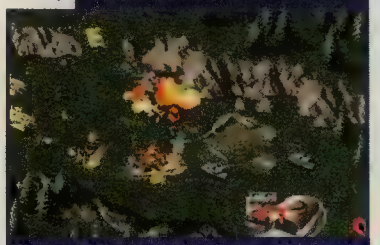


Activision's *Mechwarrior 2* is one of many games included with the PowerPlayer — and you haven't played it until you've played it on a Pentium 133!

Sounds like a pretty solid gaming solution. Will any of the other name-brand computer manufacturers jump on the gaming bandwagon? It's too soon to tell, but don't be shocked if even the biggest PC makers start taking more interest in our little hobby.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Whew! With all the craziness surrounding the holidays, things have been pretty busy around the *PC Gamer* offices. But never fear, our ears are always open for those tidbits and morsels hinting at the hottest upcoming titles. So here's the latest, and although most of these gamers won't be ready before Christmas, they may be well worth the wait...



Westwood Studios is planning an add-on package for their huge hit *Command & Conquer*.

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

If you've already played through Westwood Studios' fantastic action/strategy game *Command & Conquer*, prepare yourself for even more gaming goodness. Always looking to make the best even better, Westwood will be releasing an add-on package to supplement their hit title. *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* is a prequel to the current game, giving more detail on the conflict between the Global Defense Initiative and the Brotherhood of Nod. It will include additional missions, as well as more information on the formation of the Brotherhood, a terrorist group bent on world domination. You'll be able to get the add-on package through Westwood's web site at http://www.westwood.com. Look for it sometime in March of 1996.

Continued on page 87

The New ImagiNation

Version 2.4 includes *Front Page Sports: Football* and plenty of changes

The ImagiNation Network is now releasing its latest software update. With version 2.4 of INN, subscribers to this online community of gaming aficionados will have all kinds of new opportunities for head-to-head competition.

INN started in 1991 as The Sierra Network, the brainchild of Sierra On-Line founder Ken Williams. The service at first offered only card and board games, but gained dedicated followers partly because of the strong sense of community it fostered among subscribers. Key to this — and still a hallmark of the service — was the ability to create faces for yourself to go with your user profiles, allowing a lot more of the user's personality to come through than most services.

The Sierra Network didn't really take off for a couple years, though, and outside funding (most of it from AT&T) was secured to help keep the service afloat. Along with AT&T's support came a new name — The ImagiNation Network — and the addition of new, more ambitious multi-player games to keep subscribers gaming for hours. In November of last year, AT&T purchased INN outright.

With version 2.4 of the INN software, players can look forward to two major new games: *Front Page Sports: Football Online*, and *Free-For-All Red Baron*. Although *Red Baron* has been on INN for a while, the new version of INN's most popular game adds support for multi-player, kill-anything-that-moves aviation against some top aces.

FPS: Football Online, a multi-player version of the award-winning Dynamix series, holds the distinction of being the first and only online football sim on the market. The game carries the full endorsement of the NFL players association, so all the player names and stats are straight out of the '94-'95 NFL season.

Players first agree on a number of game conditions, such as weather, quarter length, and so on. Then the two meet on the gridiron, each calling the offensive and defensive plays and then watching as the resulting action unfolds. There's no arcade component to gameplay; it's coaching only.

Version 2.4 also marks the conversion of INN's host software from a DOS-based system to UNIX, which will help the network accommodate more users simultaneously, provide increased overall speed, and make future software upgrades much easier.



Before jumping into the on-field action, participants in *Front Page Sports: Football Online* agree on conditions.



The new log-on screen is just the beginning of the changes you can expect in version 2.4 of The ImagiNation Network.

BRAIN-SEARING, SPINE-JARRING RETINA-BURSTING, ADRENALINE-PUMPING REALISM

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Black Knight allows you to experience a level of realism only possible with the assistance of the U.S. Marines. Immerse yourself in the latest advances in simulator technology for your PC.



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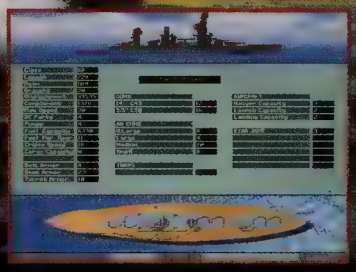
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You'll have access to the Italian, French, Russian and British navies — *all major European ships and aircraft present in World War II!* A Random Battle Generator lets you create unlimited conflict — from small surface engagements to full-blown carrier task force battles!

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An intuitive, easy to use interface, Super-VGA graphics and an astounding sound track put this simulation right on target!





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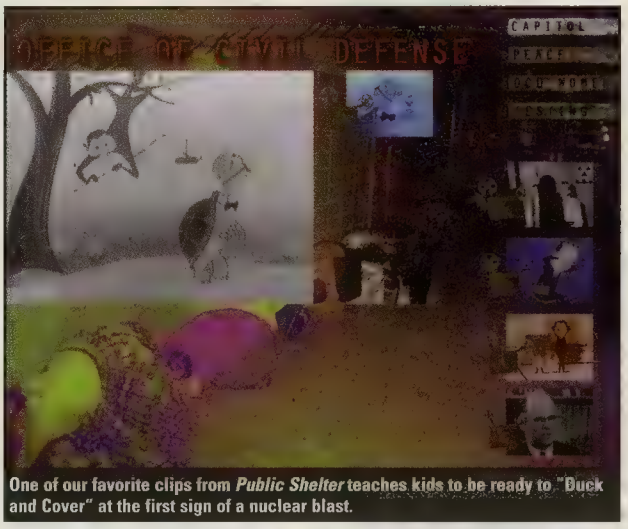
Product Information Number 227

The Atomic CD

The Atomic Cafe goes multimedia

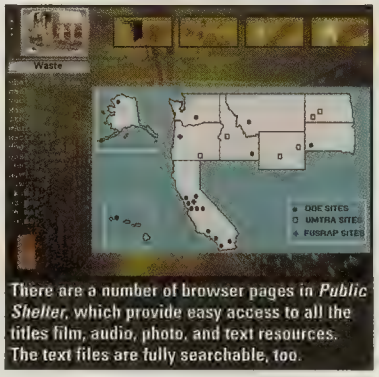
Jayne Loader's amazing documentary *The Atomic Cafe* painted an unforgettable portrait of the birth of the atomic age, combining old footage from civil defense archives, the Pentagon, and other sources, to illustrate the horror of nuclear war. Yet at the same time, the film managed to find comedy in the campy, naively optimistic government films; as long as you remembered to "duck and cover" when you saw the flash of a nuclear explosion, anyone could survive an atomic bomb blast.

Now, Loader is revisiting the atomic age with a new CD-ROM called *Jayne Loader's Public Shelter*. The disc contains 40 minutes of video, 12 hours of audio, and 1400 text files on things atomic, all of it fully searchable.



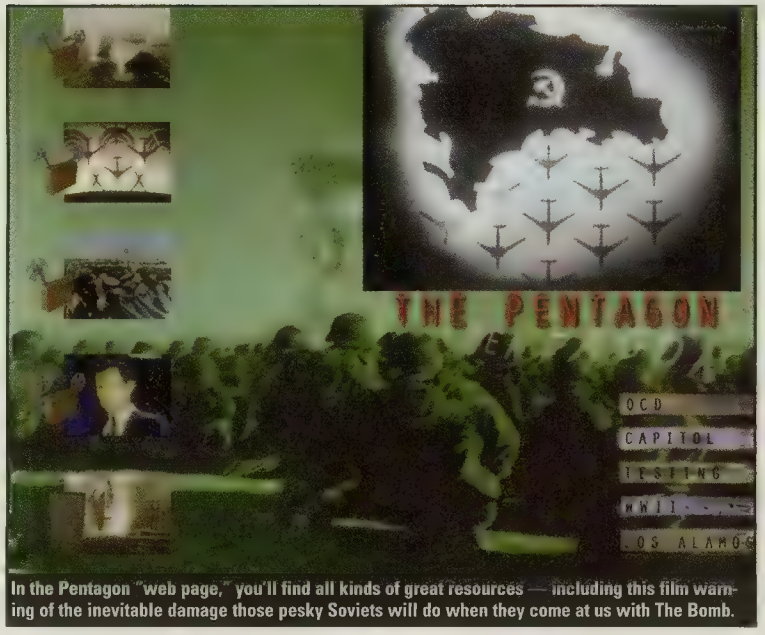
One of our favorite clips from *Public Shelter* teaches kids to be ready to "Buck and Cover" at the first sign of a nuclear blast.

Public Shelter isn't merely a CD repackaging of *The Atomic Cafe*, though. Much of the footage included hasn't been seen since the '50s, and *Public Shelter* updates the topic to include Department of Energy secretary Hazel O'Leary's recent admission that the Department of Energy had conducted secret tests on the effects of radiation exposure, including tests on unknowing American citizens.



There are a number of browser pages in *Public Shelter*, which provide easy access to all the titles film, audio, photo, and text resources. The text files are fully searchable, too.

The disc organizes the material in a series of what Loader refers to as "World Wide Web pages — not the Web of today, but the Web of the future, when the sounds and images load and play instantly." There are pages devoted to the Pentagon's official line on nuclear war, the comments of every president since FDR, and so on. It's all very eye-opening, and still a lot of fun.



In the Pentagon "web page," you'll find all kinds of great resources — including this film warning of the inevitable damage those pesky Soviets will do when they come at us with The Bomb.

As of this writing, *Public Shelter* doesn't have a national publisher yet — which is hard to believe, considering the quality of this terrific title. You can purchase it through through Great Owl Books — (800) 299-3181 — for $79.95. You can also check out *Jayne Loader's Public Shelter* on The Web at WWW.public-shelter.com.

Continued from page 84

Blade Runner

In other Westwood Studios news, the creators of *Command & Conquer*, *Lands of Lore*, and *Legend of Kyrandia* have begun work on a game based on the cult-film favorite *Blade Runner*. The Ridley Scott movie, starring Harrison Ford as the rugged freelance bounty hunter Deckard, gathered a huge following well before the "cyberpunk" genre was popular. Also starring Rutger Hauer and Daryl Hannah, *Blade Runner* was a wonderful combination of science fiction and film noir, based on Phillip K. Dick's book, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"

Westwood Studios has a big job ahead of it, though, as it seeks to accurately recreate the dark, brooding feel of the much-loved film — perhaps the very reason its taken so long for anyone to even attempt a PC game based on the original. But if anyone can get it right, its Westwood, and considering the rich potential inherent in the story, the payoff could be phenomenal.

No word on what *kind* of game it'll be yet, but you can bet we'll be following this one closely. *Blade Runner* should be ready around fall of '96.

Mechwarrior 2 Additions

Activision will soon be coming out with some killer new products centered around their hit title *Mechwarrior 2* — and if you've been dying to take on some multi-player *human* opposition, your wishes are about to be granted. The eagerly awaited network addition, *Mechwarrior 2/NetMech*, will be available early next year for multi-

Continued on page 89



http://www.lucasarts.com

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Product Information Number 159

Sound Blaster's 3D Cousin

Creative Labs enters 3D video arena with 3D Blaster

3D video looks like it'll be the next big battleground in gaming peripherals. Thanks to Windows 95's support of 3D-accelerator cards and the growing interest on the part of game designers in exploring fully realized 3D worlds, video card manufacturers are almost universally scrambling to get the best 3D acceleration solutions to market.

Now Creative Labs is weighing in with its new 3D Blaster, a 3D-accelerated video card aimed squarely at the gaming public. The new card will support Criterion Software's RenderWare device driver — an important part of the 3D Blaster strategy. Since more than 500 developers support RenderWare developers, the 3D Blaster will enjoy plenty of software support.



Now, with the 3D Blaster, even more realism will be added to incredible *Flight Unlimited*, an air-stunt flight sim by Looking Glass Technologies.

The heart of the 3D Blaster will be the GLINT 3D processor chip — a scaled down, "gaming" version of 3Dlabs' GLINT 300SX, used for CAD, modeling, animation and games authoring. The GLINT 3D supports accelerated texture-mapping and has the ability to manipulate the polygons that lie beneath the textures. This should result in visual quality and performance that will give even 32-bit game consoles a run for their money.

The GLINT 3D provides faster graphics by handling these video functions itself, rather than drawing on your PCs CPU. This should translate directly into improved game performance, and will also accelerate non-gaming applications like the next-generation VRML 3D internet browsers.

Whereas many games today run at 320x200 resolutions with 256 colors, the 3D Blaster will accelerate games running at resolutions as high as 640x480 and 65,536 colors to twice their non-accelerated speed. It will also be fully Plug-n-Play compatible with Windows 95, assuring easy installation.

For you techies out there, the 3D Blaster will feature double- buffered graphics, Z buffering, alpha transparency, hardware fogging, and texture anti-aliasing. If you don't understand all that, don't worry. Neither do we. But it sure sounds good.

How many games will support the 3D Blaster directly? Over 200 developers have already signed on, among them Electronic Arts/Bullfrog, Interplay, Mindscape, Papyrus, Looking Glass, and Ocean. Les Edgar, managing director at Bullfrog, said, "Creative Labs has a long history as an industry leader in bringing sound technology to the gaming experience, and we believe that 3D Blaster will continue that tradition of innovation."



The 3D graphics of Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* were simply stunning. We can't wait to see what *Magic Carpet Plus* will look like with the 3D Blaster powering it.

With more than 15 million Sound Blaster audio products in homes all over the world, Creative Labs has become a well-known and trusted name in gaming peripherals.

The first 3D Blasters will be designed for VESA Local Bus computers as Creative Labs aims for the over 20 million 486-based systems in use today; a PCI versions will be available in early '96 for Pentium-based systems. The $349 card should be on store shelves as you read this (around mid-November 1995), and will be packaged with six full games: EA/Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet Plus*, Mindscape's *Cybersled* and *Azrael's Tear*, Papyrus' *NASCAR*, PF Magic's *Ballz Out!*, and Looking Glass' *Flight Unlimited*. These titles will take full advantage of the 3D Blaster API, and should be impressive examples of the new 3D technology.

With so many 3D-accelerator cards poised to hit the market, it's going to be interesting to see which becomes the market leader — and which offers the best performance. One thing's for certain, though: Whether its the best or not, a lot of folks are going to buy the new Creative Labs card just because they're familiar with the Blaster name, made famous by Creative Labs' Sound Blaster line.

Continued from page 87

players everywhere. With it, you can battle up to eight 'Mechs over a local area network, or go head to head against a buddy via modem. You'll be able to purchase the package from your local software retailer — or get it free on the Internet.

An add-on package tentatively titled *Clan Ghost Bear* will be available around the same time. It'll feature at least ten new 'Mechs (including those of the Inner Sphere), new missions, and some powerful new weapons. And last, but certainly not least, *Mechwarrior 2 for Windows 95* will be hitting store shelves soon. You'll finally be able to pilot the most destructive force on two mechanical legs under Microsoft's newest operating system. For more information on these and other Activision products, check out their web site at http://www.activision.com.



There aren't any "rules of the road" to get in your way in Gremlin's new racing game.

Whiplash

Whiplash, formerly known as *Fatal Racing*, will soon be burning rubber on computer monitors everywhere. This high-speed title will feature death-defying stunts in the context of a winner-take-all race. There are no road rules in this game, where knocking out the other racers could be just as important as making the corkscrew jump. Keep an eye out for this speedy title from Gremlin Interactive.

PCG

don't play mind games

go head-to-head instead



Free Six-Button Controller for authentic arcade play!

On CAPCOM's Super Street Fighter II PC CD-ROM BONUS Pack Fight via modem or punch a punk across the country using Catapult's X'BAND! Go on-line and your brain will thank you





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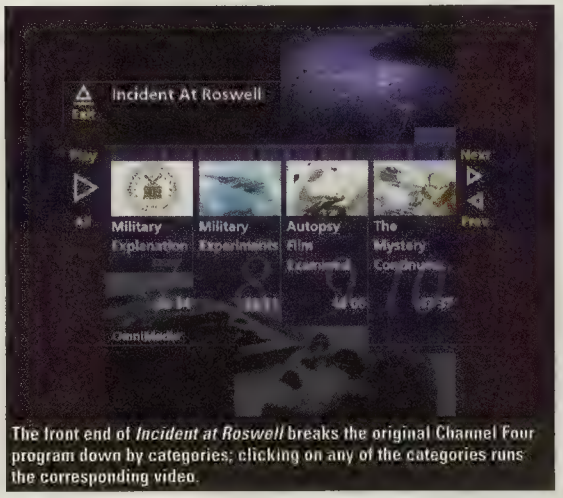
TEEN T AGES 13+

Product Information Number 103

Coroners In Space!

"Alien Autopsy" footage is the star of *Incident at Roswell*

Something happened near Roswell, New Mexico, during the summer of 1947; many say an alien spacecraft crashed, and that the government recovered both the craft and the bodies of its inhabitants. Even the U.S. Air Force admitted to having recovered a flying saucer — at first, anyway. Very quickly they recanted the story, though, saying that it was really just a downed weather balloon...



The front end of *Incident at Roswell* breaks the original Channel Four program down by categories; clicking on any of the categories runs the corresponding video.

The Roswell debate has been one of the hottest topics in the short history of ufology, and it got even hotter last year when more than an hour of 16mm film footage suddenly appeared, reportedly shot by a military cameraman during the autopsy of one of aliens recovered from the Roswell crash. The authenticity of the footage remains questionable even among those who *believe* in the existence of UFOs, but that hasn't stopped the film from becoming a much sought-after commodity. It has been used as the core of television programs all around the world, including a recent special on the Fox network.

The autopsy footage makes its latest appearance in *Incident at Roswell*, a multimedia repackaging of Britain's Channel Four television special, released by U.K. publisher OmniMedia. This CD-ROM presents a pretty good overview of the Roswell incident, including its history, eyewitness reports, and the eventual appearance of the autopsy footage. There's plenty of time given to skeptics, too, presenting a fairly even-handed appraisal of the incident.

But the star of this disc is definitely the autopsy footage itself, and *Incident at Roswell* does show more of it — and certainly more graphic portions — than were seen in the Fox TV special.

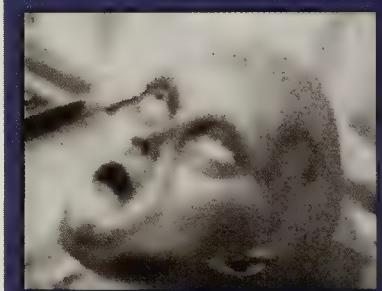
Unfortunately, though, *Incident at Roswell* is pretty light on true multimedia. The product's entire content is made up of video clips, and no attempt was made at bringing new information — text files, perhaps, or additional photographic evidence — to the content of the original Channel Four TV program. Still, considering the revival of interest in the happenings at Roswell, *Incident at Roswell* is bound to be snatched up by those looking for more information on the mystery.

Who Wants The Wishbone?

Incident at Roswell's best feature is the inclusion of plenty of that autopsy footage, showing the autopsy of an alleged alien being. And some of it's pretty graphic stuff...









If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.



"WWII air combat at its very best."
– Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World

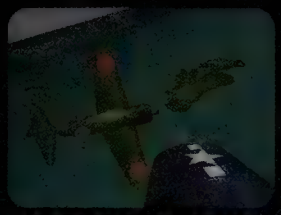
FIGHTER DUEL™

Fifty years ago, air combat decided the fate of the world. Now it's your turn. With Fighter Duel for PC CD-ROM. The most realistic dogfight simulator in history. Through amazing high-resolution graphics, you'll experience real-world physics and flight modeling as you pilot Messerschmitts, Spitfires, Mustangs, Corsairs and Zeros. There's even a rookie mode for beginners. Can you survive seven tactical scenarios? Overcome eight bandits at once? Or outgun that second modem pilot? Without losing your lunch... Or your life? Fighter Duel. The way it is, is the way it was.

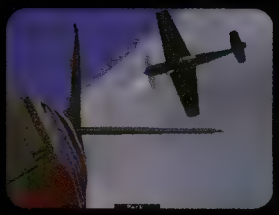




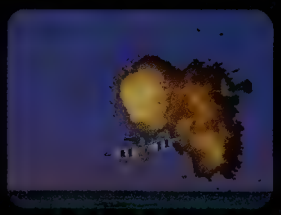
Photo-realistic, fully functional instrument panel.



Dogfight the deadly Zero or 12 other classic WWII war birds.



Scan the skies with multiple cockpit views.



Take on human opponents in two-player modem duels.

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AD&D Saves Windows 95

U.S. Gold creates Advanced Dungeons & Dragons screen saver exclusively for Win 95

Realizing that computer users are just crazy for screen savers, the programs that supposedly protect your screen from burn-in (although that's no longer a threat with newer monitors), U.S. Gold is releasing one of the first screen savers solely for the new Windows 95 environment. Called *Riddle of the Runes*, it utilizes over 175 different images from seven of TSR's most popular AD&D fantasy worlds. The images, combined with eight distinct soundtracks, video cutscenes, and an intricate puzzle the user can solve, make *Riddle of the Runes* one of the most interactive screen savers yet.

The worlds profiled are Forgotten Realms, Dragon Lance, Ravenloft, Dark Sun, Planet Scape, Mystara, and Al-Quadim — all popular in both book form and as pen and paper roleplaying games. The core of the screen saver is high-quality, high-res artwork from several top artists.

The screen saver is comprised of three modes — Adventurer, Seer, and Riddle Master. The Adventurer mode allows the user to choose different destinations on a map of the selected world; a line denoting travel moves from city to city, showing an appropriate picture when it arrives in a certain location. In Seer mode, the saver acts as a simple slideshow for the whole collection, with options to filter out worlds if desired. In Riddle mode, pictures are shown with certain clues in them. The player can use these visual clues to solve the Riddle of the Runes.



Comprised of the high-quality art that has surrounded the worlds of AD&D, this screen saver and puzzle should appeal to roleplaying computer users everywhere.

Riddle of the Runes should be available as you read this. For more information, call U.S. Gold at (415) 693-0297.

HOGs in Court

Interplay wins injunction against Lasersoft

In late September of 1995, Interplay Productions — creators of such software titles as *Cyberia*, *Virtual Pool*, and *Dungeon Master II: The Legend of Skullkeep* — filed a lawsuit against Lasersoft Inc. for their software collection *Dimensions for Descent*. The design of the Lasersoft product packaging too strongly resembled that of Interplay's blockbuster hit *Descent*, Interplay maintained. The latest on the case came following a hearing on October 2, 1995, when United States District Judge Alicemarie H. Stotler awarded an injunction for Interplay against Lasersoft, prohibiting further sales of their product. Lasersoft is required to remove the title from store shelves. Judge Stotler awarded the injunction based on the probability that Interplay would ultimately prevail in the case on the merits of its claims against Lasersoft.

The issues of the lawsuit involved trademark and related claims. *Dimensions for Descent* is a collection of add-on levels for Interplay's *Descent*. The add-on files, known as "HOGs," are similar to the WADs created for *Doom*, *Doom II*, and *Heretic*, allowing players to use special editors to create new levels for *Descent*. To use them, owners of *Descent* merely need to copy the "HOGs" to the same directory on their computer that *Descent* uses. Then, they can choose to play the add-on level from the menu when they start the game.

Lasersoft gathered many of these custom *Descent* levels together in one CD-ROM and marketed it, much like several other companies have done for *Doom*. But Interplay wasn't about to let Lasersoft make the move unchallenged. "As a matter of company policy, Interplay believes in vigorously protecting its intellectual property rights," said Christopher Kilpatrick, president of Interplay.





Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to be on top of the world? How about beneath it? There are those who have already experienced such exhilaration. Their names? Columbus, De Gama, Le Maire, Cook and Bougainville – the world's most famous explorers. Now you can create your own adventures in Exploration – a remarkably in-depth game of strategy and world conquest, new from Interactive Magic.

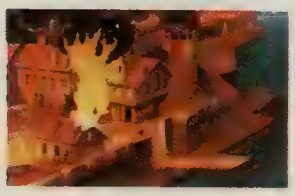
Today, you could be on top of the world.



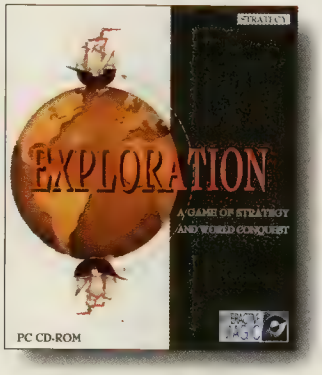
Before you set sail from Spain, Portugal, England, France or the Netherlands, you tour your home port. Oversee the construction of your shipyard. Enlist your crew. Equip your ship. Buy and sell commodities. In fact, you may even want to make a trip to the local banker for information about funding your expedition. After surviving possible mutiny and vicious battles with rival ships, you may be lucky enough to reach the New World. However, your journey is far from over. You must now embark on your quest to found a colonial empire. Conquering villages, winning over the natives and tilling the land are but a few of the challenges facing you and your weary crew.



The graphics are nothing short of brilliant. Complemented by unlimited, realistic animation scenes, every new game brings new territories to conquer. New adversities to overcome. The adventures and newfound fortunes are virtually limitless.



Tomorrow, beneath it.



For more information on Exploration, simply give us a call at 919-461-0948. The New World awaits your arrival. Do you have what it takes to make it there?

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

A game of strategy and world conquest for PC CD-ROM.

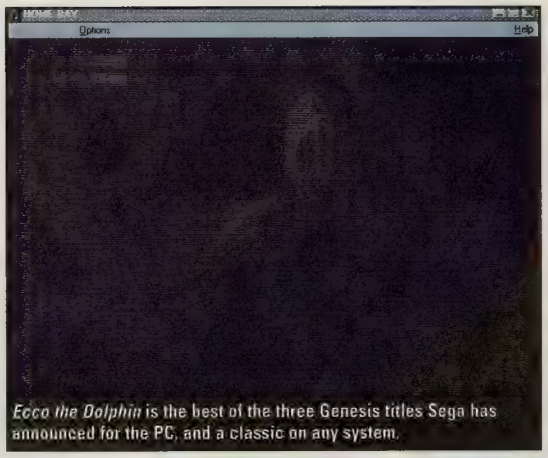
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Product Information Number 148

Who Needs a Genesis?

Sega looks to the future — and the PC

Remember when people said that PC gaming could never rival the home videogame market? Well, it looks like the times are changing; now the console manufacturers are beginning to target the PC in a big way. Videogame giant Sega is preparing to bring its extensive catalog of Genesis cartridge titles to the PC as Windows 3.1 and Windows 95-based games.



Ecco the Dolphin is the best of the three Genesis titles Sega has announced for the PC, and a classic on any system.

While it may sound a little like heresy to say we're excited about this move, we do think this influx of Sega titles can add a lot to the traditionally weak arcade side of PC gaming, and give us the chance to experience some of our favorite Genesis titles all over again.

Sega hasn't given out release dates for PC versions of some of their hot new titles like *World Series Baseball '95*, but they have announced that there will be at least three games — *Ecco the Dolphin*, *Comix Zone*, and *Tomcat Alley*, available on store shelves this Christmas.

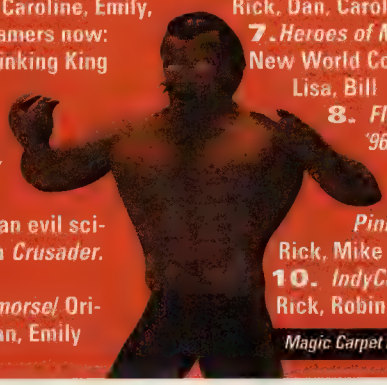


Comix Zone is one of the Sega Genesis titles that will be hitting the PC shelves around Christmas.

The PC Gamer Playlist

We here at *PC Gamer* love games so much, we talk about them to anyone who'll listen. This month, we were so excited that we subjected our advertising staff to hours of long conversations about *Command & Conquer*, *Apache*, *Hexen*, and other great games. Much to our delight, the advertising staff caught the bug and began gaming. Rick, Caroline, Emily, and Robin are true gamers now: They sit for hours, drinking King Cobra and smoking Marlboros, discussing the proper way to dispose of *FX Fighter*'s Rygil and how cool it is when an evil scientist gets torched in *Crusader*.

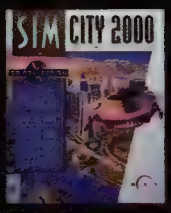
1. *Crusader: No Remorse*/ Origin — Rick, Todd, Dan, Emily
2. *Hexen*/id Software — Rick, Caroline, Dan, Mike
3. *Apache*/Interactive Magic — Rick, Carol, Matt
4. *Command & Conquer*/Virgin — Rick, Robin, Joe, Dean
5. *Beavis & Butt-Head*/Viacom NewMedia — Rick, Emily, Mike
6. *Magic Carpet 2*/Electronic Arts — Rick, Dan, Caroline
7. *Heroes of Might and Magic*/New World Computing — Rick, Lisa, Bill
8. *FIFA Soccer '96*/Electronic Arts — Everyone
9. *3-D Ultra Pinball*/Sierra — Rick, Mike
10. *IndyCar II*/Papyrus — Rick, Robin, Joe



Magic Carpet 2's evil enemy Vissuluth



It's a SimWorld. Get lost in it.







With Maxis as your travel agent, you never know where you'll land next. The SimCity 2000 CD Collection puts you in the Mayor's Mansion–just in time to handle disasters like Hurricane Hugo. SimTower offers a breathtaking view atop your financial empire–too bad there's a five-alarm inferno in progress. And our newest destination, SimIsle, lets you rule a lush rainforest–where it's the wildlife vs. the warlords. The Sim games. No restrictions apply.

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Product Information Number 163



Thinking I Could suRf on
Red cLouds all day, then
a worM hole riPPed and
twisted mY thouGhts
into toXic waste.

How I



Dispersion caNNon missiles
came toWard Me
like a schOOl of AngelfiSh,
meTallic, all gleaMing.
Hey, tHey almOst
looked eDible.



HallucinAtions begaN to happen aLL aroUnd me. Then I realiZed thOse Rockets weRe Real and they thouGht my flyiNg sucKed. Big tiMe.

diEd.



A thouSand plasMa rocKets taPPed on mY winDshield. I didn't hEar them knOcking so they taPPed harDer.



SpiNNing my heAd around in a biLLion directiOns. Bad moVe. As I wAs seriOusly violated in a cross fire from a cloud that looked as innocent as a kid holding candy.







Doing a lITTle tunnel spying, picked the wRong tuNNel obviOusly as the DOM rocketS heAding my wAy decided to do some explOring theMselves. I'll leaVe their intEnded destiNation to your imagination.



DOing lOOp the lOOp
like a moNkey on a trEE,
then shraPnel, buildiNgs,
and funKy stuFF all hit
Me on my nOse like a
wEt thiCk moUnd of sPit.

You plummet from the sky. You hit your cockpit with bulging eyes.

This is no demo. It is you flying that warship. Eight planets await your twitching trigger finger, a spot on your satellite map and the brush of your metallic wings: Terran, L-24-D, Ares, New Kroy, Sebek, Vestra, Tiamat, and the ultimate eye twitcher, Fury3. Look around your cockpit using your virtual head and fly the impossible with six degrees of freedom. Your joy erupts into a wry smile. A servo laser is your best friend, a customized cockpit and an energy shield the only barrier between you and a sharp jolt back to reality. The reality being, Fury3 is one of the first games optimized for Windows® 95. Kill stuff, fry stuff, fry, fry some more until it's as natural as breathing. Fight Fury3 to the death on multiple missions, in the clouds, on the ground, and in nethervorld tunnels.

Death comes like grains of salt out of a shaker in Fury3. Enjoy them or at least die trying.

Fly the "Trial version" of Microsoft Fury3 at http://www.microsoft.com.

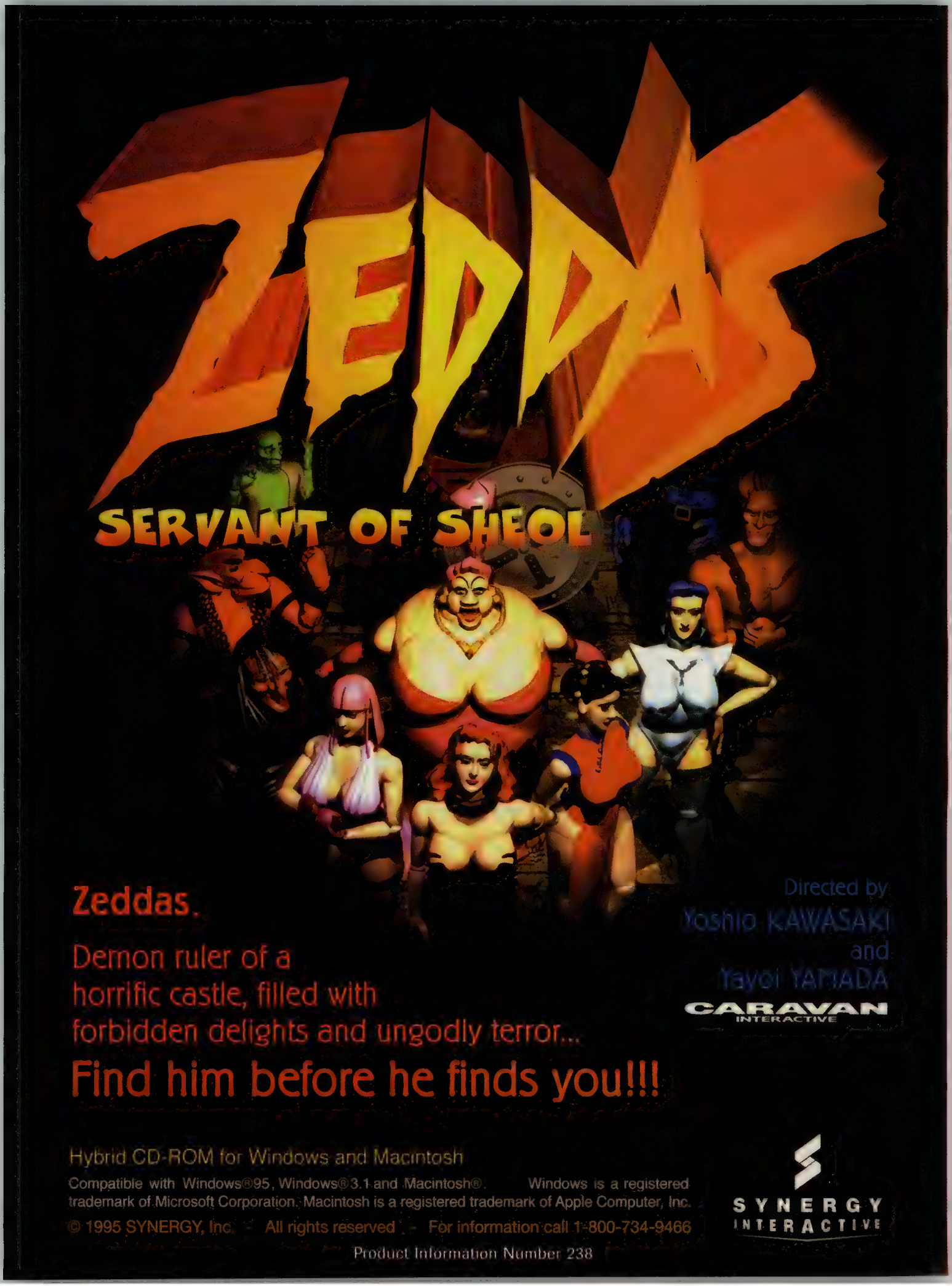




Thinking nothing bleEds on
this pyraMid-infested
plAnet, then 30 or so bOmbs
explAined to me why.
There's no time to bleEd.

Microsoft

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?


ZEDDAS
SERVANT OF SHEOL
Zeddas.
Demon ruler of a
horrific castle, filled with
forbidden delights and ungodly terror...
Find him before he finds you!!!
Directed by
Yoshio KAWASAKI
and
Yayoi YAMADA
CARAVAN
INTERACTIVE
Hybrid CD-ROM for Windows and Macintosh
Compatible with Windows®95, Windows®3.1 and Macintosh®. Windows is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation. Macintosh is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.
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SYNERGY
INTERACTIVE
Product Information Number 238

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

the games of Christmas future

p.103

You won't be able to find reviews of some of the holiday season's very latest games — which is why we've put together these previews of the titles we think will be big winners.

excellent extras

p.143

Great software deserves great joysticks, gamepads, speakers, and all the other peripherals that add so much to the joy of gaming. We've got it all — plus a list of unique stocking stuffers.

What do you get for the gamer who has everything? How are you supposed to know which of the hundreds of choices out there is right for *your* favorite gamer? Well this year, we're going to take the guesswork out of gift-giving. All you have to do is follow the expert recommendations in this special buyer's guide, and you just can't go wrong...

great gaming gifts

p.121

When you're shopping, you can't always carry a full year's worth of *PC Gamer* with you. But you can bring along this list of our 40 personal favorites, culled from all the games we reviewed in 1995.

unexpected pleasures

p.155

Sure, PC gamers love games. That's pretty obvious. But they're smart people, with fast computers and varied interests; they might like some *non-gaming* software titles, like these...


When the enemy is coming at you from the ground and the air, it helps if you can see in all directions. AH-3 Thunderstrike: Air Assault™ offers a 360 degree rotating cockpit view that allows you to look for incoming enemies without changing your flight path. If you see them before they see you, you've got a better chance of targeting your weapons. High-powered rockets, machine guns and missiles increase your kill ratio. Who knows...with a little luck, maybe your chopper won't look like swiss cheese at the end of the day.
AH-3
THUNDERSTRIKE
JVC
JVC MUSICAL INDUSTRIES, INC.
PC CD-ROM
NR
Not Rated
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©1995 JVC Musical Industries, Inc.
Product Information Number 153

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

the games of Christmas future

by the PC Gamer Staff

More hot new titles are going to be released in the months leading up to Christmas than at any other time in the year — and we've got your complete guide to the best of 'em.

Maybe you're a gamer, trying to put together the ultimate wish-list. Or maybe you're trying to find the just the right gifts for all the nutty gamers in your family — but you don't know where to begin. In either case, you made the right move. You bought *PC Gamer*.

In this section of our Holiday Extravaganza, you'll find complete recommendations for the very *latest* and best games — the games that hit the shelves in those fruitful weeks between Halloween and New Years. We've scoured the gaming industry, searching out those holiday releases that we believe will make the best gifts for gamers. No matter what genre you're interested in, you'll find what you're looking for right here — listed alphabetically, for your browsing convenience...

3D Lemmings

Puzzle
Psygnosis
(800) 438-7794

Those cute little Lemmings are back, and better than ever in their latest adventure: *3D Lemmings*. Just as the title implies, those silly little Lemmings have been thrust into a world of three-dimensional hazards — and it's up to you to save them, by helping them save themselves. We've always been big fans of the Lemmings series, but this is by far the most impressive Lemmings game we've seen to date.

Psygnosis has been able to take the deceptively simple level design that made the classic Lemmings games — *The Lemmings, Lemmings 2: The Tribes,* and *The Lemmings Chronicles* — so great, and seamlessly work it into a free-floating 3D environment that brings you a view of Lemmings that you probably never thought you'd see.



If you always wanted to zoom in on a particular Lemming to find out just what makes them so stupid, *3D Lemmings* lets you get up close and personal.

Not only will you have your choice of several camera views that allow you to get just the right perspective to guide these cute little buggers through the new challenges they'll face, but you'll also be able to step inside the shoes of a selected Lemming with the Virtual Lemming option. If you love puzzlers, this is definitely one of the year's best.

The Age of Rifles

Wargame
SSI
(800) 601-7529

Wargame lovers will have a bounty of choices this year, with new games that appeal to just about every taste. With subjects ranging from WWII to The Battle of Little Big Horn, though, it's going to be tough to decide just which title your desktop general will dig the most. But never fear; we'll give you plenty of great options.

SSI's *The Age of Rifles* is one of the more unusual military offerings of the season, and one we'll all be lining up to play when it comes out in December.



The challenge of fighting a battle at close range is what *The Age of Rifles* is all about.

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Based on the popular War Game Construction Kit series, *Rifles* won't throw you into some cold, impersonal, battle with heavy tanks or long-range artillery. Instead, this detailed simulation puts you in command of troops with little but muskets, cannons, and the determination of their commander, to see them through each scenario.

This close-quarters combat adds a lot of tension to the art of war, and provides some of the finest wargaming action we've seen in a while. With it's sleek interface and thoughtful design, *The Age of Rifles* is an exciting new addition to the War Game Construction Kit — and a must-have for wargamers.

Aliens

Graphic Adventure
Mindscape
(415) 897-9900

Mindscape's suspense-filled adventure game *Aliens* should be hitting store shelves early in the New Year, so save some of that Christmas money! It's sure to provide lots of spine-tingling excitement for sci-fi fanatics.

Based on the Aliens comics from Dark Horse, (which, in turn, were based on those creepy xenomorphs from the Alien films), this graphic adventure brings you some of the most incredible graphics ever seen on the PC. Using a technique that allows the developers to cover 3D wireframe characters with highly stylized 2D textures based on the comic-book art, *Aliens* sets new standards in graphic quality.



***Aliens* is one of the slickest graphic adventures we've ever seen, and it's also one of the scariest.**

Battles in Time

Wargame
QQP
(505) 837-5447

If you haven't warmed up to computer wargames because you're afraid they're nothing more than dull, textbook representations of statistics and technical data, this inventive take on wargaming from QQP will certainly change your mind.

Battles in Time uses a clever "plot" to set the stage for a unique combination of strategy and fun — with a healthy sprinkling of wargame realism. It's the future, and the people of Earth have evolved beyond their warlike ways. Mankind has become so passive, in fact, that the "instinctive" ability to make war has been lost. That all sounds nice in theory, but it leaves Earth defenseless when suddenly threatened by an alien attack.

To get back some of that fighting spirit, the decision is made to travel back in time to five time periods known for their warlike ways — Prehistory, the Roman Empire, Napoleonic Era, The American Civil War, and World War Two — in order to study and relearn the skills necessary to defeat the aliens.

The flexibility of *Battles in Time* allows you to try a variety of scenarios, commanding armies made up of everything from battling dinosaurs to Roman foot-soldiers.



QQP's *Battles in Time* is just the thing to introduce novice gamers to wargaming; it's got an interesting plot, and hey, you get to fight with dinosaurs.

The Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery

Graphic Adventure
Sierra On-Line
(800) 757-7707



The New Year looks like it's going to be a terrific one for adventure fans, with titles like *The Dig*, *Chronomaster*, and *Aliens* heading our way. And then there's adventure-giant Sierra On-Line...

Using full-motion video technology from their latest hit, Roberta Williams' *Phantasmagoria*, the next chapter in the life of Gabriel Knight is revealed in *The Beast Within*. Gabriel, a novelist and Schattenjager (Shadow Hunter — sort of a supernatural bounty hunter), retires to his ancestral home Schloss Ritter in Rittersburg, Germany, to work on a new book. But he doesn't get much done before he's called upon to perform his anti-supernatural duties.

The story begins when a brutal series of murders occurs in Rittersburg. The townspeople, knowing Gabriel's knack for solving all things occult, call upon him to solve the mystery — because it looks like the crimes are being committed by werewolves!



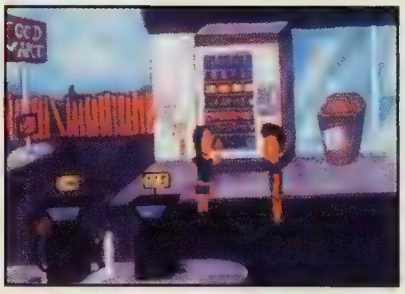
Gabriel Knight searches for clues as he tries to get the jump on a pack of killer werewolves in *The Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery*.

Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

Adventure
Viacom NewMedia
(800) 469-2539

If you enjoy the off-beat comedy of MTV's "Beavis and Butt-Head" half as much as the *PC Gamer* staff (we can't get enough), you're in for a real treat when Viacom's *Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity* hits store shelves later in the year.

The script for *Virtual Stupidity* was written by a number of B&B's regular writers, and features voices provided by the show's creator (he does the voices on the TV show!), Mike Judge. Quite simply, this is one of the funniest computer



Those loveable screw-ups from MTV's "Beavis and Butt-Head" star in their very own computer game, due out this Christmas. Cool.



BATTLE BEAST™

DEAD ON

Battle Beast sets the standard for game play and realism on the PC.

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Question: What are Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter and Primal Rage? **Answer:** Redundant!

Welcome to the 7th Level.
Game Over!

Visit your retailer for a free demo or download the Battle Beast Promo on AOL (keyword: SEVENTH) or CompuServe (GO: SEVENTH) or on the Web (www.7thlevel.com). For more information or to order, call 1-800-884-8863 ext. 103.

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Product Information Number 81

SFX™

The only pad that lets you call the shots.



Overall "97" Rating.
"...the best hardware I've seen all year"
COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, July '95

"The top of the heap, however, is the Suncom SFX,..."
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD, September '95

"The two buttons along the top edge are great for straffing in Doom,..."
PC GAMER, June '95

It's tough enough fighting hatchet hooligans from Heretic, or disgusting denizens from Doom. But when you're also at the mercy of how well your pad performs, you're just a step away from getting trashed.

That's why Suncom created the SFX JoyPad with Keyboard Emulation Technology. For the first time ever, you're in total control. Because now, you control how your joypad works...instead of the other way around.

Imagine being able to customize your own personal "template", with up to 48 commands exactly where you want them! Simply flip the switches into programming mode, press the SFX button you want to program, tap the key you wish to assign, and you're done.

Whatever button configuration you choose is recognized by your PC just as if it were being directed by it's keyboard. And because SFX copies keyboard keystrokes, it can be used with any PC game—even games without joystick compatibility!

What's more, SFX needs no special software and uses none of your PC's memory.

SFX by Suncom. It's great for killing time. Even greater for killing the enemy.

FOR IBM & COMPATIBLE PCs / WINDOWS '95 READY / SUGGESTED RETAIL $29.95

Suncom TECHNOLOGIES

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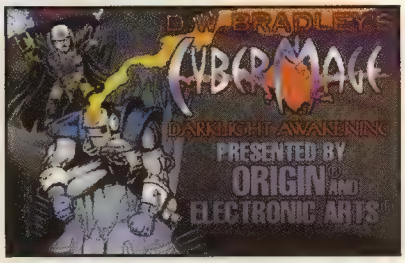
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Product Information Number 237

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

games we've seen in a long while — and it's also a clever adventure game as well. You see, Beavis and Butt-Head want to join Todd's gang so they'll be cool, but before they can do that they'll have to cut class, try and avoid Mr. Buzzcut, and create a little mayhem.

The actual adventure-game portion is surprisingly challenging, but always manages to reflect the comic goodness of the series. And there are even a few mini-games — like a music box where Beavis and Butt-Head will fart a song for you — to give you a break from the brain-work.



***CyberMage* is a mystical-magic-meets-high-tech first-person shooter that'll get your mojo workin' — and let you kill bad guys at the same time!**

CyberMage: Darklight Awakening

First-person Shooter
Origin
(512) 434-4263

Origin's first-person action-adventure *Cybermage: Darklight Awakening* thrusts you into a world where high-tech weaponry and powerful magic have combined to give muscle to a terrifying new order of evil-doers that threatens to destroy the world.

You're up against a high-tech wizard that's been dabbling in more than just magic, involving you in a sinister conspiracy. You must storm his fortress, but before you reach this Boss Bad-guy you'll have to find your own spells and devastating weapons — and of course, blast legions of his ill-tempered toadies. You can even take control of tanks and aircars, which make killing a breeze.

The graphics are great; dark and eerie at times, but very colorful at others — especially when magic spells and weapon blasts fill the air. You'll need a Pentium with 16MB RAM to achieve the highest resolution, but even with 8MB (which lets you play in 320x200 mode) *CyberMage* looks good. The game even comes with it's own action-packed comic book created by David W. Bradley, which provides depth to the story and your character.

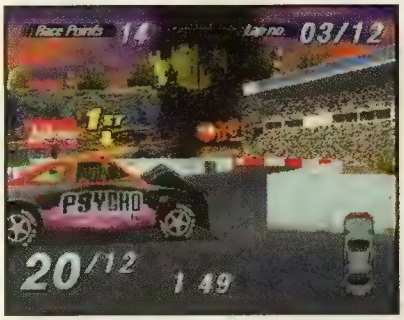
Destruction Derby

Racing Action
Sony
(800) 438-7794

If you're like our old buddy Muley Webfoot, and believe that driving the straight and narrow in sims like *NASCAR Racing* isn't as much fun as smashing into other cars at high speeds, this is the game for you. *Destruction Derby* will put you on a track where the only winner is likely to be the car still able to roll away from the action. But it's a little more complicated than just bashing into your opponents; *Destruction Derby* uses realistic physics models for all the cars, and drivers must figure out the strategies necessary to avoid collisions that might damage them, while pursuing crashes that'll damage others. Everything is calculated on the fly, so any damage done is remembered and applied to the car for the duration of the race.

There are three overall ways to play the game, depending on whether you value victory more than destruction. You can make a mad dash for the finish line; opt for a full-out destruction derby where the last car moving is the champion; or go for a combination of the two (we call it smash-and-dash). With these three variations, you'll be playing this one for a long, long time — regardless of what kind of driving your in the mood for.

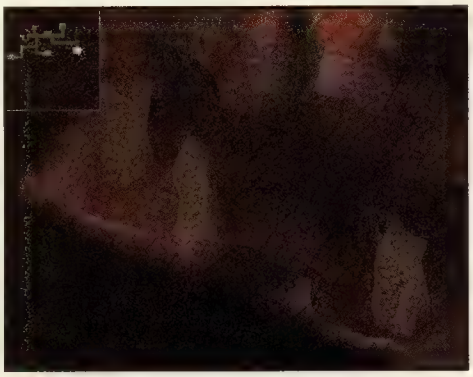
The graphics are superb, and with a replay feature, you can relive that gorgeous ten-car pileup over and over again. Psygnosis has done everything they could to make this title as realistic as possible without sacrificing speed, and we think they've done a fantastic job of just that.



The action is hot and heavy in *Destruction Derby* — your job is to survive.



The crossroads can be fatal if you're not careful. There's no limit to the wreckage in Sony's *Destruction Derby*.



***Dungeon Keeper*, a roleplaying/strategy game, comes to us from the brilliant minds at Bullfrog — and we all know how great their games are.**

Dungeon Keeper

Roleplaying Game/Dungeon Simulation
Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525

Roleplaying games have been a big part of computer gaming since the early days, when the Commodore 64 was the king-daddy of personal computers. While the technology for RPGs has grown with advances in computer hardware, the basic ideas behind them — kill monsters that have invaded a castle/kingdom/dungeon and take all their stuff — have remained pretty much the same. But *Dungeon Keeper* is an RPG with a difference. The brilliant minds at Bullfrog have used the unbridled creativity that brought us games like *Magic Carpet* and *Syndicate* to come up with a new twist: This time around, you're running the dungeon, and trying to keep the heroes out of your domain and away from your treasure.

Part roleplaying game, part strategy game, *Dungeon Keeper* is one of the most unique titles we've seen. You place monsters where you think they'll do the

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA



As this fireball zooms down the corridor, you can see its surroundings light up — one of the impressive features of *Dungeon Keeper*.

most good, and pray they don't end up killing each other before those pesky do-gooders arrive.

With multiple views of your dungeon, the ability to play from the third or first person perspective, and some great looking graphics, this could be one of the hottest games of the year. The dungeon is fully texture-mapped, and uses a technique called Realtime Lighting — which means that torches flicker like, well, torches, and shadows move with the light source. The game also supports network play for up to eight players; your friends can be the heroes entering your dungeon, or you can all campaign against the computer.

Hexen

First-person Shooter
Raven Software
(800) IDGAMES (434-2637)

This is sure to be one of the big releases this holiday season. *Hexen* is Raven's sequel to *Heretic*, and you can count on marked improvements — not just a quick rehash of the original. While the story behind *Hexen* is sure to appeal to all those down-trodden mystic warrior-types who made it through the original, it features numerous improvements in graphics and the addition of all-new creatures, weapons, spells, and other goodies. It's bound to keep you riveted to your monitor for hours of monster-bashing goodness.

One of the new options Raven has included in *Hexen* will allow you to select a character from among three separate types — Fighter, Cleric, or Mage. They each come with their own unique weaponry, and have different ratings in four standard attributes; speed, armor, magic, and strength. The Fighter has maximum speed, armor, and strength, but is weak in magic. The Cleric has above-average speed, magic, and strength, and is probably the most balanced character. The Mage has maximum magic skills, but he's slow, weak, and has little armor.

The opportunity to play as three characters makes *Hexen* three times as much fun. You'll enjoy weeks of relentless first-person carnage in this one.



Just like the in mystical towns in the original *Heretic*, a whole new army of undead nasties await you in *Hexen*, and this time you can choose from three types of characters.



The SVGA graphics in *IndyCar II* look incredible and add volumes to the breathtaking sensation of speed as you slide through turns on your way to the checkered flag.

IndyCar II

Racing Simulation
Papyrus
(617) 868-5440

If you were one of countless race fans who fell in love with Papyrus' previous racing simulations — *IndyCar Racing* and *NASCAR Racing* — you'll be happy to hear that the technical wizards who created them haven't been sleeping in the pits during the off season. They've been hard at work, and are bringing those nimble Indy cars back to the PC with a brand new look.



Available in both a DOS version and a Windows 95 version, *IndyCar II* is the perfect holiday stocking stuffer for race fans.

As in the award-winning *IndyCar Racing*, in *IndyCar II* you'll get the chance to test-drive all of the high-powered race cars of the IndyCar circuit, and burn rubber on incredibly authentic tracks. From the near perfect oval of the New Hampshire International Speedway to the ferocious twists and turns at Laguna Seca, you'll find plenty of diverse challenges here to suit every driving style. And as always, you'll have the chance to build your dream car from a wide variety of chassis and engines.

Since *IndyCar II* is based on the '95 driver roster and features complete racing season specs, you'll see some familiar faces and cars rolling around the tracks — and hopefully, most of them will be in your rear-view mirror.

Papyrus has made sure all the features that made the first *IndyCar Racing* such a hit — network/modem play, multiple camera views, and realism variables that let you set up just the sort of action you want — are back and easier to use. And in a move that's sure to please Indy-

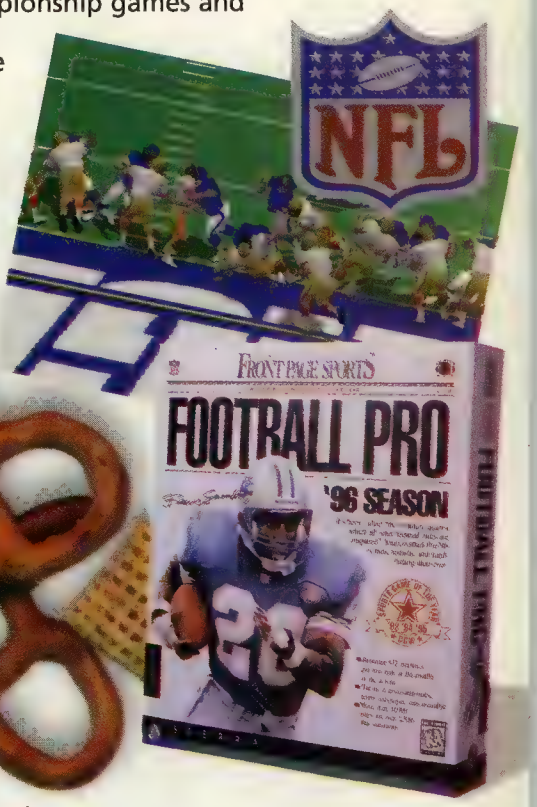


Win a Super Bowl Party!

Which teams will make it to the League Championships? Which teams will make it to the Super Bowl?

Give us your guess now, and you could watch that Super Bowl game on a 50" Color widescreen TV from Hitachi while you enjoy a catered party with your closest friends. (We'll even throw in $300 bucks to get your carpets cleaned after they finish spilling stuff on the rugs!).

How do you win? It's easy, just give us the names of all four teams that will play in the AFC and NFC championship games and the scores. As a tie-breaker question, include the total offensive yardage of the winning team. The entry that has the closest answer will win a Super Bowl party for up to 20 people.



One Grand Prize winner will receive:

* A Super Bowl-sized 50-inch color TV from Hitachi (approx. value $2,700)
* A catered Super Bowl party for 20 people (approx. value $400)
* $300 cash (to get your carpets cleaned!)

Five First Prize Winners will receive:

* Footballs autographed by Detroit Lion Superstar Barry Sanders (approx. value $200)

100 Second-prize winners will receive:

* One-year subscriptions to PC Gamer magazine. Each monthly magazine comes with a CDROM chock-full of the latest and greatest software demos. (approx. value $95)

200 third-prize winners will receive:

* A limited-edition *FPS: Football Pro '96* T-shirt (approx. value $18) — until now only worn by the design team at Dynamix!

To Enter: Give Us Your Guesses on-line on the **Sierra Web Site at www.sierra.com.** Or you can use the mail by filling out the short entry form below and mailing it to us at: **Win a Super Bowl Party Contest, C/O Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 53008, Bellevue, WA 98015.**

SIERRA®

Rules & Stuff:

1) Employees and their families of Sierra On-Line, Inc. and its subsidiaries, agencies, and suppliers are not eligible. Limited to U.S. residents only. 2) This contest is not endorsed by Players, Inc., the NFL, or its affiliates. 3) All entries become property of Sierra On-Line, Inc. This contest is sponsored by Sierra On-Line, Inc., 3380 146th Pl. SE, Bellevue, WA 98007. 4) Must be a U.S. resident and at least 18 years old to enter. 5) No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. Limit one entry per person — two per household. 6) Winning entries will be decided at the sole discretion of Sierra On-Line, Inc. In the case of a tie, prizes go to the entry with the earliest postmark (or the earliest posting on SierraWeb). 7) The results of this contest will be announced January 17, 1996. Winners will be notified by mail. 8) Void outside the U.S. 9) All entries must be postmarked by December 26, 1995. 10) Sierra On-Line, Inc. is not responsible for late, lost, illegible, or misdirected entries. 11) All prizes will be awarded. For a list of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Super Bowl Contest Winners, Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 53008, Bellevue, WA 98015.

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP				NFC CHAMPIONSHIP	
AFC Team 1	Score	AFC Champ	Total Offensive	NFC Team 1	Score
AFC Team 2	Score	NFC Champ	Total Offensive	NFC Team 2	Score

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Signature: _____

(Signature certifies that I am over 18 and have read and agree to all contest rules.)

Product Information Number 209

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Car fans who were jealous of *NASCAR Racing*'s SVGA mode, *IndyCar II* will feature a gorgeous 640X480 mode that simply must be seen to be believed.

IndyCar II will be available in two spicy versions: The first is for MS-DOS based systems, while the second is designed to take advantage of Windows 95. You'll be able to multitask out to the track whenever you want!



With great-looking graphics and realistically modeled player movement, EA has hit the sports mark with *Madden NFL '96*.



John Madden and Pat Summerall chat it up for *Madden NFL '96*.

Madden '96

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525

Electronic Arts' *John Madden Football* for the Sega Genesis became an instant hit, and has found its way to just about every console machine around. Though the endorsement of football great John Madden probably had something to do with the game's success, it was most impressive for the way it mixed arcade-style action and near-perfect playability. *Madden* just *felt* right, and created a football experience few other titles have been able to match.

That tradition of football excellence continues in *Madden NFL '96* for the PC. With over 100 teams and more than 600 players, there are almost unlimited possibilities for custom football action.

EA Sports wanted to throw in all the extras they could for this PC version of the classic, so there's plenty of entertaining full-motion video, pre- and post-game shows, and commentary throughout. The animated movement of the players was created by capturing the actions of professional football players in their respective positions, so the on-field action looks remarkably realistic from kick-off to the point-after.

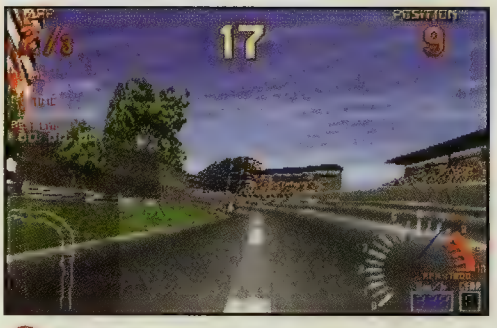
With a playbook made up of more than 250 different offensive, defensive, and special team plays, and true-to-life stats for all the players, this is *the* football sim of choice for armchair coaches everywhere.

Screamer

Arcade Action
Virgin Interactive
(714) 833-1999

Virgin's heart-stopping new racing game, *Screamer*, is the latest in the growing line of high-speed games to come out this season. But unlike *Hi-Octane* or *Zone Raiders*, *Screamer* isn't the sort of game where you shoot your opponents or fly some futurisitic hovercraft through an endless maze of tunnels. This is a road race, and doesn't have anything in common with *Deathrace 2000* or *Gumball Rally*.

You can choose from a dozen different vehicles as you prepare for this arcade-style racing experience, and from six separate courses. While *Screamer* isn't meant to be true simulation, there are some realistic physics models in place here that'll make staying on the track a little harder than in the typical arcade racer. The physics for each car differ, too; traction, speed, acceleration, and other factors vary from car to car, so choosing the right one for the type of track you'll be racing becomes a major strategy. If you don't want to mess with shifting gears, there's an automatic transmission option.



Whoa boy, over 300 mph and climbing! In Virgin's *Screamer*, you don't have to follow any rules.

The game also supports multiplayer action over a modem or serial link for head-to-head play, and can support up to six players on a network.

Silent Hunter

Submarine Simulation
SSI
(800) 601-7529

Silent Hunter may prove to be the best WWII submarine warfare sim ever to hit the market. It recreates the feel of being aboard an actual WWII sub with great detail and authenticity, yet still provides a simple, intuitive interface that won't force you to join the Navy just to get things moving.

The geography of the coastlines you'll prowl are also executed with fine detail. Accurate models of coastal cities, ports, and harbors were created for *Silent Hunter*, based on actual period maps of the wartime pacific theater. There are nine of these coastal patrol zones, extending from the Solomons to the Sea of Japan, and all boast the same emphasis on realism. The graphics are SVGA throughout, with digitized recreations of over 40 Imperial Japanese Navy and merchant ships.



Run silent, run deep. Good advice in this very accurate — and enjoyable — WWII submarine sim.

WING COMMANDER IV

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

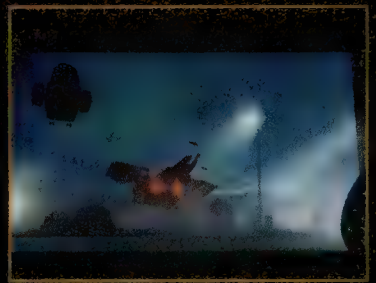
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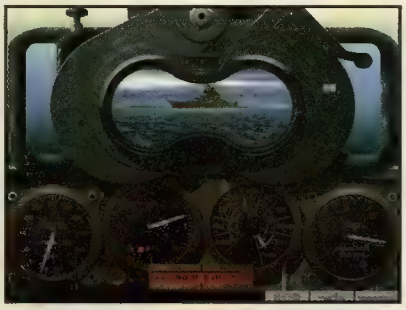
ORIGIN Interactive Movie

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Product Information Number 184


"WingMan equals maximum control. I love this thing, man!"
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Supreme Warrior of the Cyber Skies
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• Welcome to the grip that really grips.
• This extra-weighted base is going nowhere.
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Product Information Number 157

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA



From up on deck, you'll view the picket boats and destroyers in a hi-res window.

SSI also retained the services of William "Bud" Gruner, commander of the *USS Skate*, as a technical advisor to the designers. Gruner is the recipient of the Navy Cross and Silver Star for sinking thousands of tons of enemy steel, including a light cruiser. Gruner also provides narration of technical and tactical matters, and shares some of his real-life anecdotes.

Space Bucks

Economic Simulation
Sierra
(800) 757-7707

Looking for a strategy game to see you through the New Year? Impressions — now part of the Sierra family — has a darn good one that takes the basic ideas behind their fun strategy game *Detroit* and puts it in a futuristic setting. Instead of building the perfect automobile, in *Space Bucks* you'll try and build the perfect spaceship for profit. Will it be a transport that brings you the most success, or a sleek fighter that can outrun pirate ships? Fortune won't come easy, though; the competition is always trying to run you out of business by slashing prices and adding the new features that discriminating customers want.

With SVGA graphics and a number of new options, we can't wait to get our hands on this update of a strategy classic.

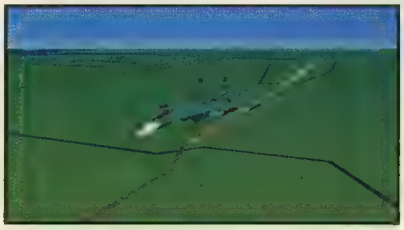
SU27 Flanker

Flight Simulation
SSI
(800) 601-7529

Flight-sim fans are going to have a lot to be thankful for this Christmas — especially if they find this title under the tree. SSI's *SU27 Flanker* impressed the hell out of us when we first saw it this past summer, and promises to be one of the most intense flight sims of the year.

SSI's goal in creating *SU27* was to have the most accurate flight sim on the market, with performance vectors that exactly model the real-world physics of Russia's high-performance SU27 jet-fighter.

SU27 Flanker creates a realistic world around its exceptional flight model, too, where even the slightest change in temperature or wind can affect the performance of your high-tech aircraft. The details necessary to create such an accurate simulation come straight out of Russia, from previously classified specs that have become available only since the fall of the iron curtain. In fact, many of the sim's Russian designers were involved in the Soviet aerospace industry.

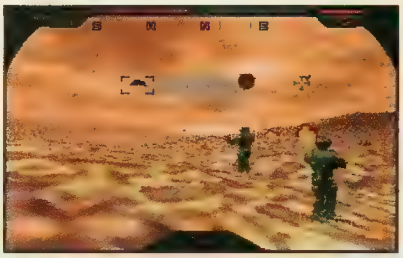


If it weren't for the fall of communism in Russia, the technical data to produce a sim as detailed as ***SU27 Flanker*** probably wouldn't be available...

Terra Nova

Action
Looking Glass Technologies
(617) 441-6333

The folks who brought you the first-person technology behind the Ultima Underworld adventures and *System Shock* are nearly finished with their sci-fi combat simulation, *Terra Nova*. And ever since it was first announced, this innovative title has ranked high on our official *PC Gamer* Wish List.



Terra Nova **will thrust you into virtual worlds like never before.**

In *Terra Nova*, you'll not only will you get a near limitless supply of first-person destruction, but you'll also enjoy a terrific story of human conflict in the near future and a strategy-adventure game where your decisions and your ability to command will be thoroughly tested.

With stunning graphics based on the texture-mapping techniques used in their aerobatic flight simulator *Flight Unlimited*, Looking Glass has created a completely immersive world for *Terra Nova* that will keep you playing for hours.

TIE Fighter CD-ROM Collector's Edition

Action
LucasArts
(800) 969-4263

After receiving the highest rating ever given by *PC Gamer* and earning 1994 *PC*



Realistic terrain and dire circumstances are just part of *Terra Nova*'s appeal; there's a fast action-adventure in here as well.

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA



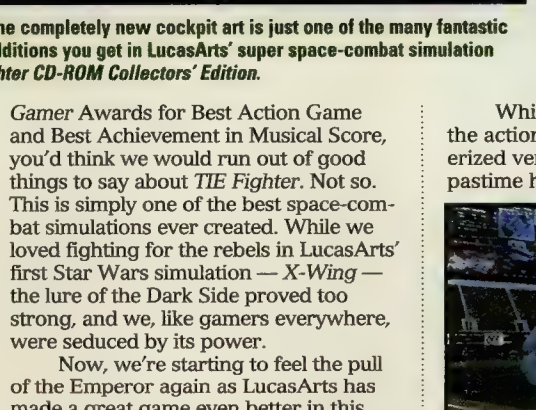
The completely new cockpit art is just one of the many fantastic additions you get in LucasArts' super space-combat simulation *TIE Fighter CD-ROM Collectors' Edition.*

Gamer Awards for Best Action Game and Best Achievement in Musical Score, you'd think we would run out of good things to say about *TIE Fighter*. Not so. This is simply one of the best space-combat simulations ever created. While we loved fighting for the rebels in LucasArts' first Star Wars simulation — *X-Wing* — the lure of the Dark Side proved too strong, and we, like gamers everywhere, were seduced by its power.

Now, we're starting to feel the pull of the Emperor again as LucasArts has made a great game even better in this must-have collectors edition. This all-in-one CD-ROM will include the missions from the original *TIE Fighter* game, the add-on disc *Defender of the Empire*, and 20 new missions that'll let you win favor with the Emperor as you wage war against the rebellion.

If that were all there was to the *TIE Collector's Edition*, we'd be as happy as a Wookie in Ton-Ton guano; but there's much, much more. In addition to enhanced sound and music, LucasArts has gone back through the animated cutscene sequences and added SVGA animations and extra scenes that add volumes to the tale of the Empire. Best of all, the flight sequences can now be played in a very detailed SVGA mode, giving you the feel of actually starring in your favorite Star Wars film.

If you haven't picked up a copy of the original *TIE Fighter*, this CD-ROM collection is the perfect opportunity to embrace the Darkside of the Force and begin whipping some rebel butt.



The space-flight scenes aren't the only ones that have gone SVGA; in the *TIE Collectors CD-ROM*, so have these cut scenes.

VR Sports Baseball

Sports Simulation
Interplay Productions
(800) 969-4263

Interplay Productions' newest line of sports titles — the VR series —is coming out of the dugout this holiday season. Their first title, *VR Sports Baseball*, steps up to the plate — and it looks like this one's going out of the park!

While it's primary appeal will be to the action-oriented crowd, this computerized version of America's favorite pastime has a little something for everyone — in-depth statistical data, big-name rosters, realistic graphics, and fast baseball action.



Sumptuous graphics and unbelievable player animations are just a few of the reasons we're looking forward to getting our hands on a copy of *VR Sports Baseball.*

Wing Commander IV

Space Combat Simulation
Origin
(512) 434-4263

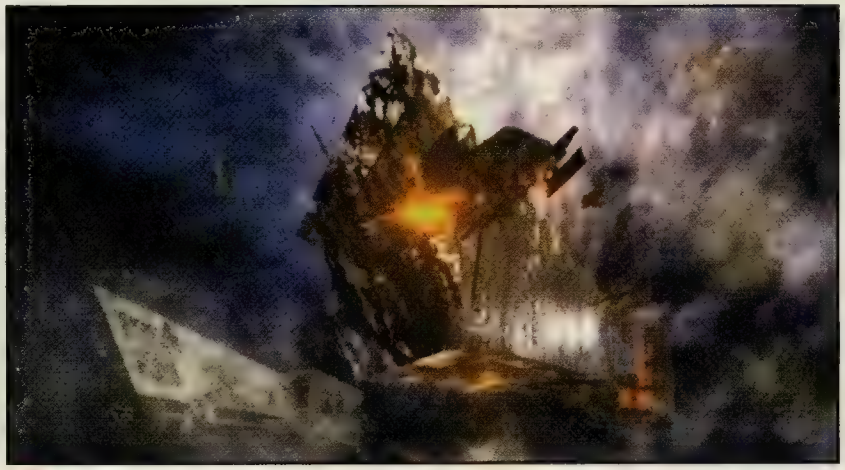
Last Christmas, Origin's *Wing Commander III* revolutionized the series, bringing movie-style production values, big-name actors, and some amazing graphics to PCs across the land. It was such an overwhelming advancement in technology and storytelling that even Wing Commander critics praised the accomplishment.

If you witnessed *Wing Commander III*'s explosive ending, you might have thought the threat of Kilrathi attacks had been all but eliminated, leaving the Terran Confederation free to pursue more peaceful avenues. But the kitties are back, and they're a lot tougher than anyone ever thought.

For *Wing Commander IV*, creator Chris Roberts has brought back most of the stars from the first game, including Mark Hamill as Colonel Blair, Malcolm McDowell as Admiral Tolwin, and Tom Wilson as Maniac.

And they'll be starring in what is quite possibly the most expensive computer game ever produced (the budget has been reported to be something close to $7 million dollars — more than our team spends on beer in a whole year!).

Why the hefty price tag? For one thing, the video sequences that made up so much of *Wing III*'s appeal have been shot on film this time, then digitized using new techniques that'll allow better playback quality on the PC. The game's star-fighting engine has also been streamlined to provide faster action and better graphics.



The Kilrathi are back in *Wing Commander IV*, and so are those gorgeous graphics. Here, a Terran Confederation transport takes one in the side and explodes in a shower of sparks.

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WE'RE KICKIN' IT WITH OUR GOOD FRIENDS. THEN WE'LL BE THEIR SLAVES.



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Product Information Number 253

HOW TO MAK
AND ANNIHILA



You've crashed on a strange planet. You quickly strike a deal with your newfound alien buddy, Gaan. You'll help blow away his hostile robot inhabitants. He'll help you get safe passage off the planet. Easier said than done. Together, you'll have to solve deadly puzzles and avoid traps, red slugs, lizards, glass tunnels, acid and sparking cables. You'll go from hauling butt through the forest to blasting into a bomb-filled mine shaft to fighting through an armory to destroy a reactor. It's Alien Odyssey – the PC CD-ROM game with incredibly smooth character animation and Argonaut's exclusive 3D adventure game technology. It's total annihilation. But in a friendly sort of way.

MATURE M AGES

ARGONAUT BRENDER

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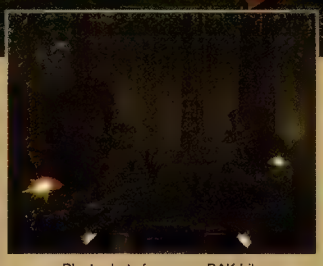
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E FRIENDS
TE ENEMIES





Infiltrate the enemy Comm Bunker.



Blast robots from your DAK bike.

ALIEN ODYSSEY

PHILIPS

Product Information Number 187

OWN THE



"By tapping into the talents of a skilled Russian design group, SSI may have hit the mother lode — the Mother Russia lode, that is."

— Joseph Novicki, PC Gamer Magazine

It's no rumor, the Russians are coming. And they're bringing the most amazing flight simulator you've ever seen — the first to take full advantage of state-of-the-art Windows® 95 technology!

Modeled after the awesome Su-27 fighter by a team of Russian aerospace professionals, SSI's Su-27 FLANKER™ is being hailed as the most realistic flight sim ever for the PC.

An exceptionally powerful, multi-tiered Mission Editor involves you in everything from single training missions to the planning and execution of full-scale campaigns — all in exquisite detail. Take the role of Pilot, Squadron Commander or Theater General, in this Russia vs. the Ukraine Eastern European shoot-out.



Anatoly Kvotchur, Russia's top test pilot, knows the real Su-27 better than anyone in the world. His role as technical advisor ensures a simulation of the ultimate in accuracy.

No matter which role you choose, stay alert! Your enemy, in the air and on the ground, is very, very technically accurate, deadly, and disconcertingly tenacious!

Fly Russia's most powerful fighter and see how it feels to own the sky!

SIMULATION HIGHLIGHTS:

- *Flight model of unprecedented accuracy — this is the definitive military flight simulator.*
- *Powerful, user-friendly training mode covers every aspect of flight management, as well as weapons delivery techniques for all weapons.*
- *Conflict takes place in the Crimean region and features hypothetical hostilities between Russian and Ukrainian forces.*
- *Detailed briefing/de-briefing makes sure you have the latest information. You'll always know what to do — or what went wrong...*

IBM 256-COLOR SVGA DISPLAYS.







SKY

"It's the sim we've been dreaming of all these years... Su-27 is quite literally a dream come true."
— STRATEGY PLUS

"...Su-27 exhibits considerable potential to unseat Falcon 3.0 as king of the hard-core simulations."
— TOM BASHAM, COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"...the most detailed flight sim we at PC POWER have ever seen."
— PC POWER



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Offer ends March 31, 1996.



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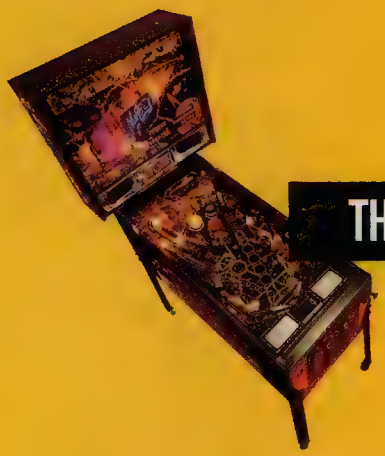
Call 1-800-771-3772 for Game Rating info.

RATING PENDING RP

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(figure 1)

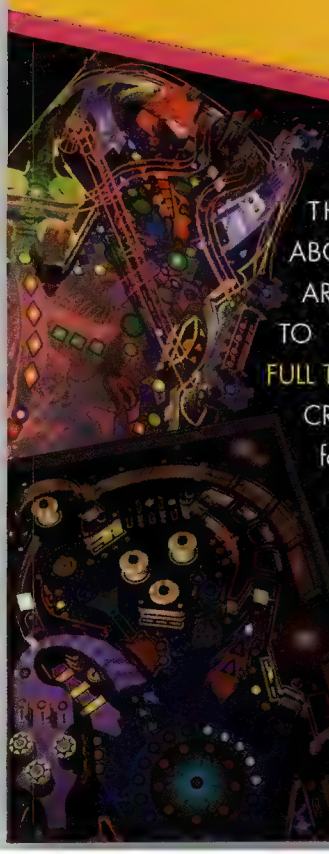
THE HARD WAY.

Bring Home Real Pinball Action



(figure 2)

THE EASY WAY.



THE HEFTY ONE ABOVE WILL GIVE YOU THE REAL ARCADE EXPERIENCE AT HOME—AND A QUICK TRIP TO THE CHIROPRACTOR. THE SLEEK, LIGHTWEIGHT MODEL BELOW—FULL TILT! PINBALL—ALSO DELIVERS THE 3-D, MULTI-BALL PINBALL ACTION YOU CRAVE, while saving your back (and a pocketful of quarters). With Full Tilt!, new for Windows® 95, you're bringing home three different tables—all with real ball movement, real sounds, and really cool zipper flippers. So pick up Full Tilt!, real, tournament-style pinball made easy. (Weight belt not required.)

Featuring Space Cadet as seen in the Microsoft® Plus! companion for Windows® 95

Designed for Microsoft® Windows®95

MAXIS



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Product Information Number 164

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA



by the PC Gamer Staff

We made a list, and we checked it twice, just to help you find the best games for the price ...

We know you're being inundated with all kinds of hype designed to capture your holiday game-buying dollars, and — just between us — some of the games being pushed on you are bound to be disappointments. That's kinda how hype works, you know.

There's nothing more heartbreaking than a gamer playing a bad game on Christmas day, trying to be brave and make everyone think he's having fun. We can't protect everyone from such a tragedy, but we wanted to at least be able to say we tried.

That's why we put together this handy listing of 40 can't-miss games from 1995. We've played these games to death, we've reviewed 'em — and we can recommend 'em without hesitation. There's something here for every gaming taste, so read on, and keep your wish list handy.

Apache

Flight Simulation
Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0722

This graphically gorgeous simulation of the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter probably has a broader appeal than any other game of its kind. Hard-core hardware nuts can crank up the realism and find out just how complex and sophisticated the Apache is; but for gamers who don't know an altimeter from an autopilot, it can be a rousing arcade-style shoot-'em-up. It's a perfect introduction to air combat simulations, but it won't disappoint sim veterans.

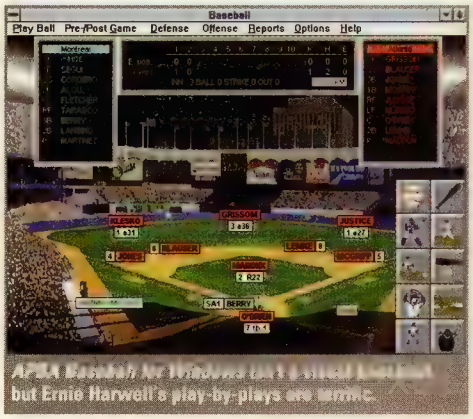

Apache's texture-mapped Super VGA graphics are crisp and amazingly detailed.

RATING 95%

APBA Baseball for Windows

Baseball Simulation
Miller Associates
(203) 972-0777

Digitized speech play-by-plays are nothing new in sports sims; they've been around since Al Michaels' voice added a touch of class to *HardBall III*. But they've never been as good as Ernie Harwell's play-by-plays in *APBA Baseball*; you'll be tempted to turn your monitor off and just *listen* to the game. There's something magical about the way this program recaptures the wonder of our national pastime better than most of the flashier baseball sims on the market.



APBA Baseball for Windows isn't a visual knockout, but Ernie Harwell's play-by-plays are terrific.

RATING 90%

Ascendancy

Strategy
Broderbund Software Inc.
(415) 883-5889

All "conquer-the-galaxy" games have the same basic ingredients: exploration,

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

research, ship-building, diplomacy, and — of course — warfare. But *Ascendancy* distinguishes itself with beautiful graphics and a real sci-fi-style sense of wonder. It also has one of the best automated tutorials we've ever seen in a game, taking you step-by-step through its delightful intricacies so painlessly, you'll forget you're learning.



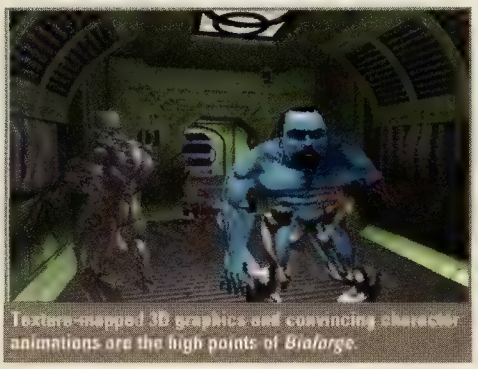
In *Ascendancy*, you custom-build your own starships with the latest technology from your research labs.

RATING 93%

Bioforge

Graphic Adventure
Origin
(512) 335-5200

While it had suffered from major delays throughout its production, *Bioforge* proved that good things come to those who wait. The outstanding 3D-rendered graphics and convincing character animations are reason enough to *start* playing *Bioforge*, but you'll *keep* playing it because of its dark, intriguing story, intense action, and clever puzzles.



Texture-mapped 3D graphics and convincing character animations are the high points of *Bioforge*.

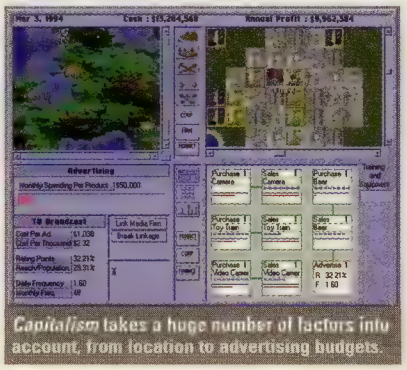
It's an amazing hybrid: part graphic adventure, part arcade game, part movie — and all entertaining.

RATING 88%

Capitalism

Business Simulation
Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0722

Hours after you start playing, the depth of this business simulation will still surprise you. *Capitalism* gives you more different ways to make your fortune than any other game in the genre; you can open a retail store, manufacture goods, play the stock market, or all of the above. It's complex enough to be a real education in the ups and downs of business, but it's easy to learn and a lot more fun than going back to college.



Capitalism takes a huge number of factors into account, from location to advertising budgets.

RATING 89%

Command & Conquer

Wargame
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
(714) 883-9710

If you liked the fast-paced strategy of *Dune II*, you'll absolutely love *Command & Conquer*. It's a great-looking, great-sounding wargame that's full of wonderful surprises; there's always some new weapon or strategic challenge just around the corner, so you'll play this one through to the final mission — then start over and play it again as the bad guys. Best of all, *Command & Conquer* has modem and network options that let you link up with as many as three other gamers for a real free-for-all.



C&C is an excellent real-time wargame.

RATING 91%

Crusader: No Remorse

Action-Adventure
Origin
(512) 434-4263

When Origin released the fantasy role-playing game, *Ultima VIII: Pagan*, a lot of gamers complained that it was too much like an action game. Origin took those gripes to heart — and responded by creating a terrific shoot-'em-up based on the *Pagan* engine. The result was *Crusader*, and with its beautifully detailed SVGA graphics and incredible animation, it bears only a passing resemblance to its predecessor. Don't bother wearing socks when you play *Crusader*; the sights and sounds in this game will knock 'em right off.



Crusader's mind-blowing graphics include some spectacular explosions.

RATING 93%

D-Day: America Invades

Wargame
Avalon Hill
(410) 254-9200

Like all wargames designed by Atomic







WARHAMMER
SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT

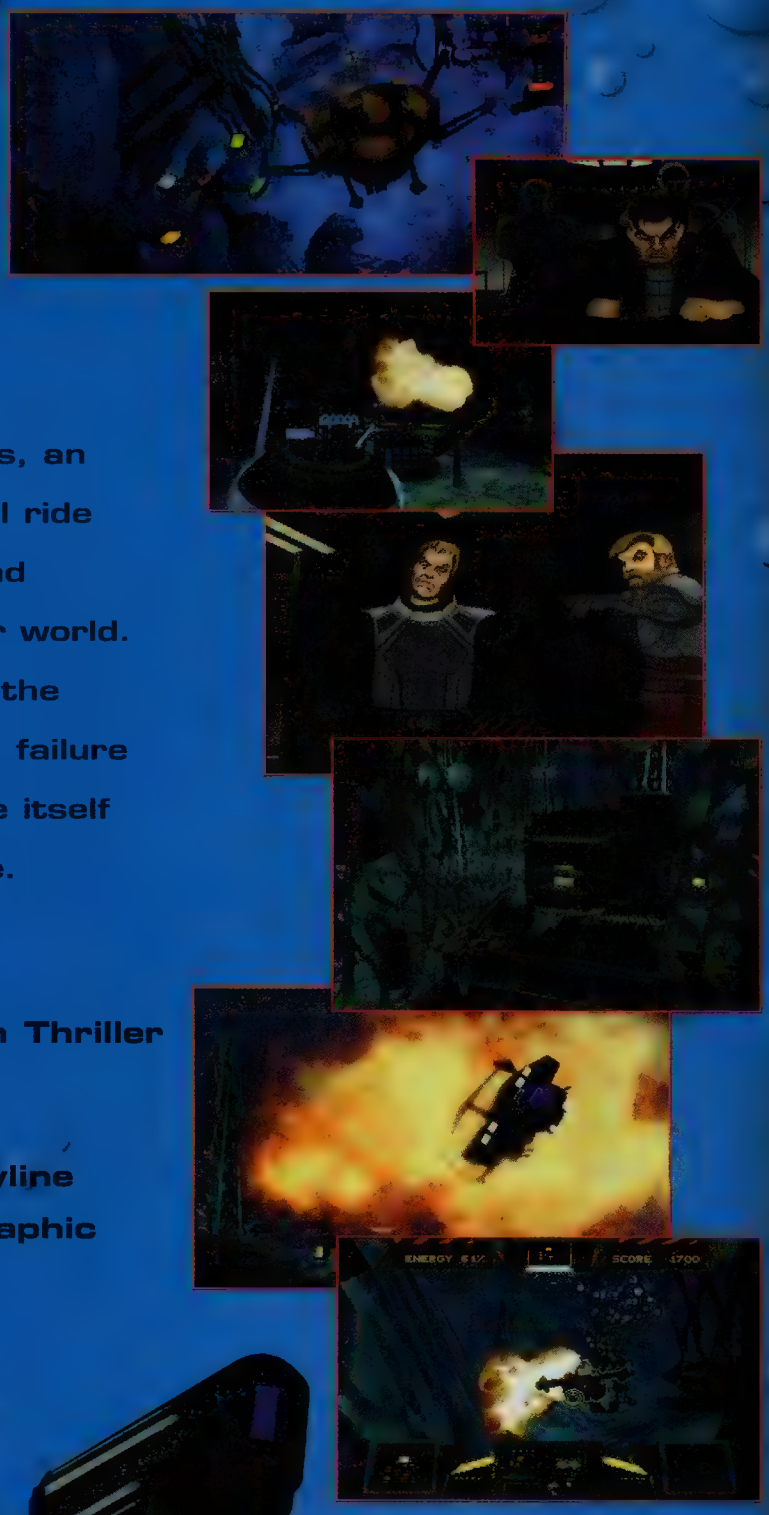
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Product Information Number 173

Take A Deep Breath



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WETLANDS™

Product Information Number 179

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Games, *D-Day* balances exceptional depth and historical accuracy with terrific graphics and a clean, easy-to-learn interface; even casual wargamers can get into this one. No other wargame to date is better at putting you in the thick of the most crucial moments of World War Two.



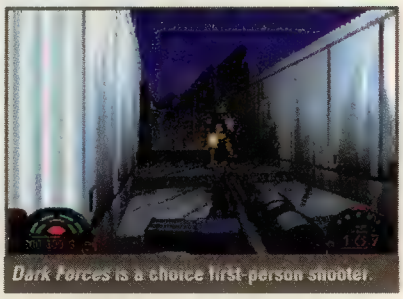
D-Day: America Invades is the latest wargaming masterpiece from Atomic and Avalon Hill.

RATING 95%

Dark Forces

First-person Shooter
LucasArts
(800) 782-7927

Sure, it's true this game probably wouldn't exist if *Doom* hadn't created the first-person shoot-'em-up craze. But this is not your average *Doom*-clone — it's a *great Doom*-clone. See, the designers of *Dark Forces* understood that there's more to *Doom*'s appeal than its 3D graphics or in-your-face violence, and while this game looks and sounds terrific, there's a lot more going on here. As a one-man army working for the Rebel Alliance, you'll have to do a lot of shooting — and solve some intriguing puzzles — to prevail. Dark Forces also includes spectacular cutsceen animations that are just the thing if you're a fan of the Star Wars films. Whether you're a fan or just an avid gamer looking for something extraordinary, don't pass up *Dark Forces*. It's a blast.



Dark Forces is a choice first-person shooter.



Enemies in *Dark Forces* are nicely detailed.

RATING 92%

Descent

Action-shooter
Interplay Productions
(800) 969-GAME

If flight sims make you queasy, you'll definitely have to stay away from this game. But if you've got the stomach for a fantastic, first-person rollercoaster ride, you'll love *Descent*. There's only the barest skeleton of a story in this game — just enough to justify the space-fighter, robot-shooting action — but the real stars are true-3D movement and amazing texture-mapped graphics. If you want action, you want *Descent*.



Interplay's *Descent* is a vertigo-inducing 3D game with some gorgeous graphics.

RATING 96%

FIFA Soccer '96

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

FIFA is unquestionably one of the most impressive sports sims on the market. It's not just the stunning SVGA graphics or the remarkably realistic player animations — there's a wonderfully solid soccer game underneath all that chrome, with comprehensive league and tournament play and lots of multi-player options. Even if you only pay attention to soccer during the World Cup, you'll be knocked out by *FIFA*. (*Editor's Note:* For more info on *FIFA Soccer '96*, check out the demo on *The CD* and our review on page 207 of this issue.)



Electronic Arts' *FIFA Soccer '96* has stunning graphics to match its superb gameplay.

RATING 92%

Full Throttle

Graphic Adventure
LucasArts
(800) 782-7927

George Lucas' PC game company has been making excellent graphic adventures for years now, but they've outdone themselves with *Full Throttle*. This game's seamless blend of 2D and 3D graphics makes for some of the most amazing visuals you've ever seen in an adventure title, and there's plenty of LucasArts' trademark humor as *Full Throttle*'s two-fisted, lantern-jawed hero fights the forces of evil in an off-kilter world of biker gangs and bad guys.



A blend of 2D and 3D objects gives *Full Throttle* its distinctive comic-book style.

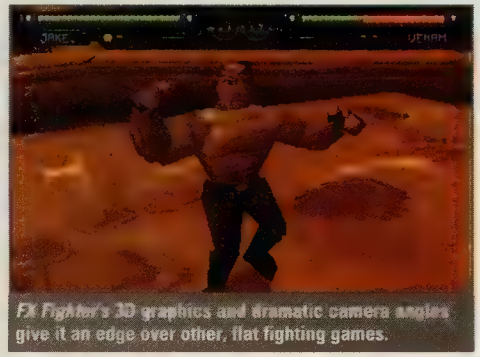
RATING 90%

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

FX Fighter

Arcade
GTE Interactive Media
(800) 438-8632

FX Fighter's 3D graphics and slick animation alone put it head and shoulders above any of the flat, 2D fighting games on the market, but it also has every bit as much gameplay as its less flashy competition. A colorful cast of texture-mapped aliens, each with a long list of cool moves, means *FX Fighter* is full of fun surprises, and its head-to-head options make for lots of replay value.



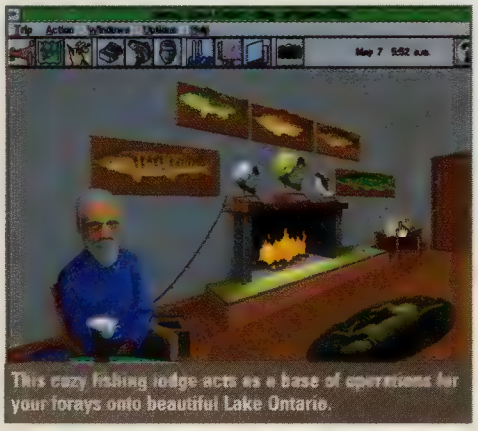
FX Fighter's 3D graphics and dramatic camera angles give it an edge over other, flat fighting games.

RATING 94%

Gone Fishin'

Fishing Simulation
Amtex
(613) 967-7900

If you think fishing is boring, you haven't played *Gone Fishin'* — and if you like to wet a line now and then, you'll love this game. In *Gone Fishin'*, you take to the waters of Lake Ontario's Bay of Quinte to haul in some pike and muskie. It sounds simple, but that's a big part of the addictive appeal of *Gone Fishin'*; just as a real fishing trip is a great break from the stress of the real world, this game is a welcome change from shoot-'em-ups or complex wargames. It's also a surprisingly accurate fishing sim, with well-modeled fish AI, accurate lake topography, and a bait shop full of lures to choose from. Trust us: You'll love it.



This cozy fishing lodge acts as a base of operations for your forays onto beautiful Lake Ontario.



A sonar chart and depth finder are part of your arsenal in *Gone Fishin'*.

RATING 88%

Great Naval Battles Vol. III

Wargame
SSI
(408) 737-6800

SSI's *Great Naval Battles* series finally realizes its true potential in this third outing. It's amazingly complex — it's certainly not for wargaming newbies — but an improved interface makes even the biggest engagements manageable. And the Super VGA graphics and dramatic sound effects give you a real feel for the terrible majesty of World War Two-era naval warfare. *GNB Vol. III* is a big, beautiful look at every aspect of war at sea in the days before guided missiles and supersonic jets. It ought to be in every wargamer's library.



Great Naval Battles Vol. III is an amazingly detailed simulation of war at sea in WWII.

RATING 92%

Heroes of Might and Magic

Strategy
New World Computing
(818) 889-5650

Did the people at New World know what an addictive experience they were unleashing on us unsuspecting gamers with *Heroes of Might and Magic*? Surely not, or clearer heads would've prevailed, and they'd have kept this game off the market. *Heroes* is a simple but shockingly entertaining fantasy wargame that you'll play ... and play ... and play. If you love strategy, get this one — but try and remember to eat.



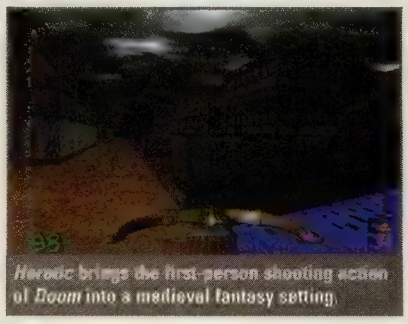
Heroes is a simple but addictive marvel.

RATING 88%

Heretic

First-person Shooter
id Software
(800) 434-2637

Designed by Raven Software using the basic game engine behind *Doom*, this is a swords-and-sorcery version of id's



Heroic brings the first-person shooting action of *Doom* into a medieval fantasy setting.

DO UNTO others as you would have them do unto you. IN THIS CASE, rip out their spine and internal organs.



It is the most intense fighting tournament on the universe. It is now available on the PC. It is an exact replica of the infamous arcade but it has special PC encryption codes that unlock debilitating powers. It has distorted mind and music identical to the coin-op's. It has network play capabilities, which means you can go head to head or four on four with your ill-fated friends. It is not going to be pretty.

Mortal 3 for the PC

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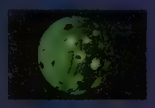
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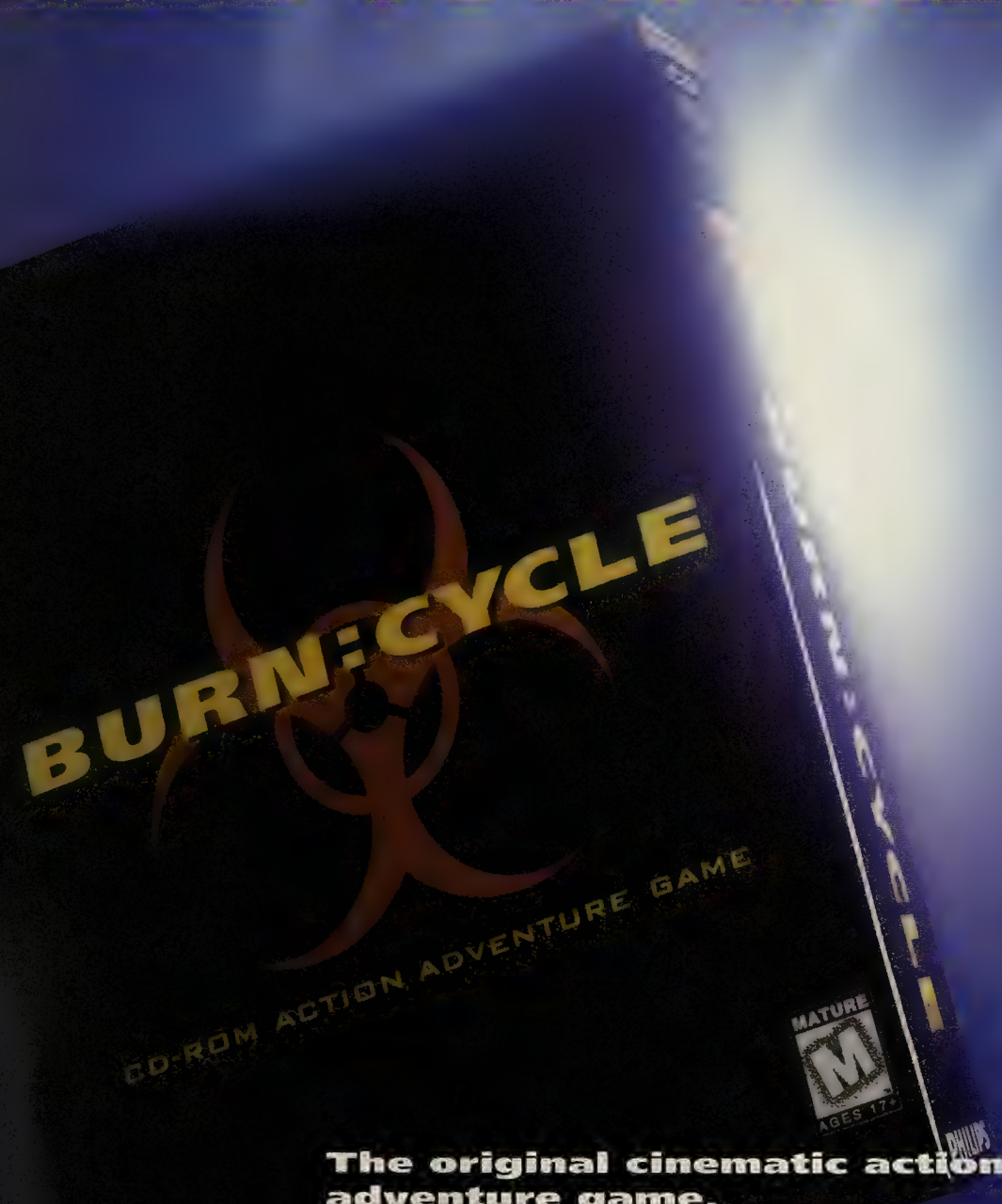
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PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

phenomenally successful action game. The graphics are even more impressive than those in *Doom*, with some truly creative enemies to fight, and the action is every bit as frenetic. Best of all, *Heretic* has all of *Doom*'s modem and network options for multi-player action.

RATING 88%

The Incredible Machine 2

Puzzle
Sierra On-Line
(800) 757-7707

If you're fascinated by those old Rube Goldberg cartoons — the ones that depict hilariously complex contraptions that accomplish really simple tasks — *The Incredible Machine 2* is a puzzle game that'll draw you in for hours and hours of head-scratching gameplay. In *TIM2*, you're presented with a relatively simple goal (get two bowling balls into two baskets, for instance) and you're given a bewildering assortment of tools (helium balloons, hamsters in wheels, conveyor belts, etc.). Your task is to assemble those tools into a machine that'll do the job. It's your chance to be an inventor!



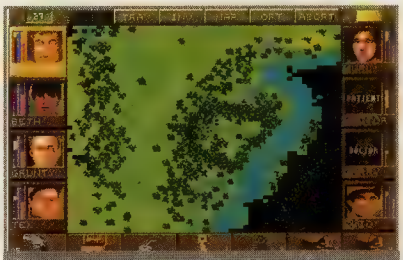
The Incredible Machine 2 challenges you to build outlandish contraptions.

RATING 90%

Jagged Alliance

Roleplaying Simulation
Sir-tech Software, Inc.
(315) 393-6633

Jagged Alliance is a fascinating mix of game elements: tactical, turn-based combat, strategy, and roleplaying, and it works surprisingly well. You lead a team of mercenaries sent to the fictional island of Metavira to protect its inhabitants from an avaricious scientist and his troops. There's lots of *X-COM*-style combat, with soldiers running, ducking, and shooting in jungle battles and house-to-house skirmishes, but there are also lots of items to search for and puzzles to solve.

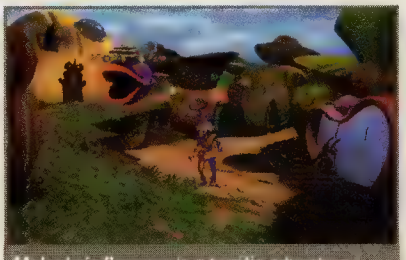

Sir-tech created a satisfying blend of strategy and roleplaying in *Jagged Alliance*.

RATING 89%

The Legend of Kyrandia, Book 3: Malcolm's Revenge

Adventure Roleplaying
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
(714) 833-8710

With this third installment in the acclaimed Kyrandia series, the talented designers at Westwood Studios outdid themselves. *Malcolm's Revenge* has everything you look for in a graphic adventure: An absorbing story, great characters, hilarious dialogue, and tricky puzzles. With an easy-to-use interface and more than one way to win the game, *Malcolm's Revenge* gives you a whole lot of bang for your adventuring buck.


Malcolm's Revenge is a terrific adventure.

RATING 88%

Magic Carpet 2: The Netherworlds

Action
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

Magic Carpet was also one of the best games of 1995, but its sequel is even better. To the original's fast-paced, high-flying, spell-slinging action, *The Netherworlds* adds tons of new spells, new creatures, and a mission-based structure that keeps the action from becoming monotonous (one of the few complaints we could muster about *Magic Carpet*). There are also some new visual effects that improve on the first game's already stunning graphics; in subterranean settings, caverns twist and turn, and during night missions, your fireballs light up the sky.


Magic Carpet 2 improves on an already great game.

RATING 88%

Mechwarrior 2

Simulation
Activision
(310) 473-9200

It seemed as if we were going to wait forever for this game to appear; Activision actually scrapped an earlier version of *Mechwarrior 2* and brought in a new team to rebuild it. Turns out it was


Mechwarrior 2 took forever to reach the shelves, but it's well worth the wait.

GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMIN

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

worth the wait — this futuristic battling-robots sim is a wonder to behold and a joy to play. With its gorgeous, detailed Super VGA graphics; a rich background courtesy of FASA's Battletech games; and complex tactical options, *Mech 2* is every bit as good as we were hoping it would be.



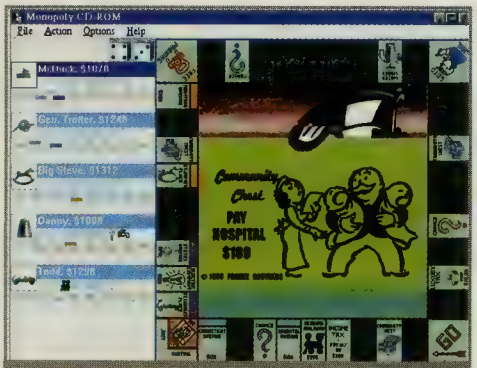
Some really stirring cinematic animation sequences grace Activision's *Mechwarrior 2*.

RATING 93%

Monopoly CD-ROM

Economic Game
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
(714) 833-9710

This PC version of the classic real estate-trading game is a perfect example of how a board game should be translated to the computer. The beloved game of *Monopoly* is here in its entirety, including all those rule variations people love to argue about before the game starts. But there's also plenty of stuff that could only be done on a PC, like charming animations of game pieces, an excellent interface that takes care of all the boring details for you, and Internet support that lets you link up with would-be tycoons from all over the world.



The PC version of *Monopoly* features all the fun of the board game classic, plus some multimedia touches.

RATING 90%

NASCAR Racing

Simulation
Papyrus
(617) 868-5440

It wasn't long after Papyrus released the excellent *IndyCar Racing* that sports fans started nagging them for a stock-car game. With *NASCAR Racing*, they delivered — and then some. This is no simple action game; it's a *simulation* in every sense of the word, with depth and complexity to spare. The graphics aren't too shabby, either, with mind-blowing detail in SVGA mode, and the sound effects will make you think you're trackside. If you're a racing fan, you've got to have this one in your collection.



NASCAR Racing from Papyrus is a hard-core simulation of stock-car racing.

RATING 94%

NBA Live '95

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

Don't let the name fool you; this is much, much more than a quick translation from the cartridge game. Everything about *NBA Live '95* is a treat for the eyes and ears, from the squeak of sneakers to the thunderous, rim-rattling slamdunks. This action-packed game looks great in standard VGA mode, but the high-res SVGA screens have to be seen to be believed.



Electronic Arts' *NBA Live '95* is one of the best pro basketball sims you'll find on the PC.



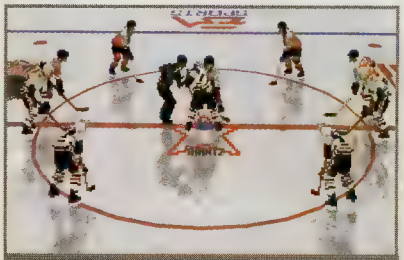
The team lineups in *NBA Live* give you all the details you need in a beautiful SVGA package.

RATING 90%

NHL '96

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

There's a new sheriff in Hockey Town, and its name is *NHL '96*. EA's NHL series has always served up terrific action, but they really pulled out all the stops with this newest version. With *NHL '96*, you get the same rock-solid gameplay as in previous versions, updated with tougher AI, all of the in-depth statistics you'd ever want and the best league and season play around. *NHL '96* also delivers knockout high-res graphics, incredibly convincing sound effects, and multi-player options — plus a rocking soundtrack and dramatic "camera" angles courtesy of EA's new Virtual Stadium technology. This is *the* hockey game to have.



NHL '96 adds drop-dead gorgeous graphics to an already excellent hockey sim.

RATING 92%

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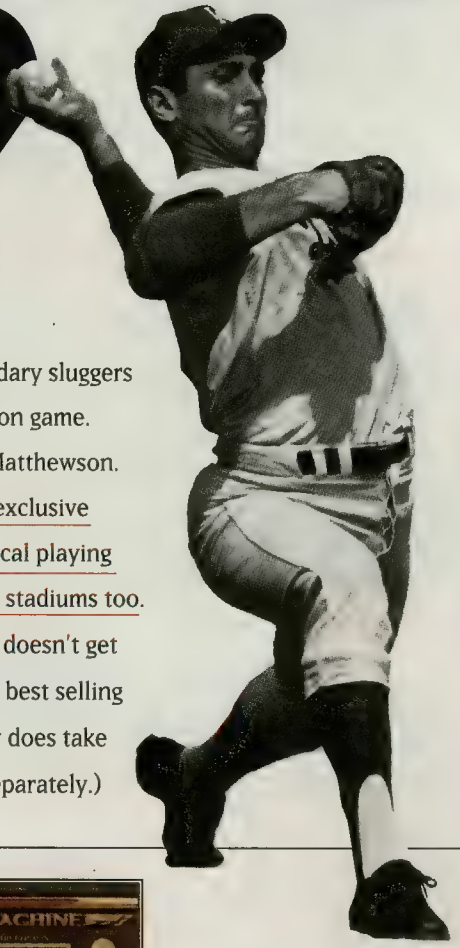
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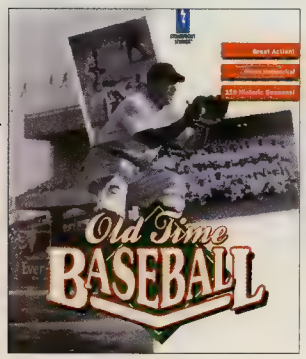
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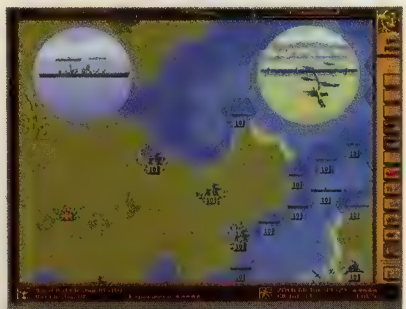
Product Information Number 236

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Panzer General

Military Simulation
SSI
(408) 737-6800

We've called this one the best wargame since *Empire*, and if you're a gaming veteran, you know there's no higher praise. *Panzer General* gets under your skin with attractive graphics, a simple interface, and loads of addictive gameplay. This is the perfect program for anyone who's never played a wargame but wants to get into the genre — but it also has enough depth to please the real grognards.



SSI's *Panzer General* is an addictive balance of historical detail and intuitive playability.

RATING 93%

Perfect General II

Wargame
Quantum Quality Productions
(908) 788-2799

The Perfect General secured QQP's reputation as a maker of high-quality wargames, and the follow-up just confirms it. *PGII* is what wargamers sometimes call a "beer and pretzels" game; it's incredibly simple to learn (just as it's simple to learn how to eat pretzels), but it's deep enough to hold your interest and tease your brain for hours (that must be where the beer comparison comes in). It's also a very hard game to stop playing (beer again). And if you think you're too sharp for the computer-controlled generals, you can use the modem and network options to match wits with a cagey human opponent.



"Beer and pretzels" simplicity characterizes QQP's *Perfect General II*.

RATING 91%

PGA Tour '96

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

EA's sports games just keep getting better and better, as the latest version of the PGA Tour golf simulation proves. The 1996 model is already out, and with its spectacular graphics and terrific gameplay, it's the first golf game to surpass the long-standing champion, *Links 386 Pro*. You get 14 computerized PGA pros to play against, an option for tournament play, a digitized announcer, and two picture-perfect courses (Avenel and Spyglass Hill). *PGA Tour '96* is a terrific package — it's the mother of all golf sims.



Links 386 Pro is no longer the best golf game for the PC, now that *PGA Tour '96* is in town.

RATING 90%

Ripley's Believe It or Not: The Riddle of Master Lu

Adventure Game
Sanctuary Woods
(800) 943-3664

Reality and fiction meet in Sanctuary Woods' first graphic adventure, which casts you as a young Robert Ripley, creator of the Believe it or Not! books and museums. In a story written by television veteran Lee Sheldon (he worked on the third season of "Star Trek: The Next Generation"), Ripley and his resourceful sidekick, Mei Chen, travel to one exotic locale after another in search of the seal of the first emperor of China — and any other bizarre artifacts that might bring business to Ripley's Odditorium back home in New York. With a gripping plot supported by beautiful backgrounds and full-motion video, *The Riddle of Master Lu* has the look and feel of classic pulp fiction.



Ripley and Mei Chen find a sinister surprise in *Master Lu*.

RATING 91%

Stalingrad

Wargame
Avalon Hill
(410) 254-9200

Another excellent wargame designed by Atomic Games, *Stalingrad* uses the impressive "World at War" system to match historical depth and painstaking realism with unbeatable ease-of-use and accessibility. This fantastic World War Two-era game uses different map scales to depict different scenarios; from the sweeping strategies possible at the



Atomic Games refined its "World at War" system for Avalon Hill's magnificent *Stalingrad*.

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

largest scale to the tight, street-to-street tactical scale, *Stalingrad* gives you a thorough feel for the hard lessons Hitler's troops learned in Russia. And it lets you answer some intriguing "what-if" questions: Could the Reich have prevailed if Hitler had listened to his generals?



The three-kilometer-per-hex scale in some *Stalingrad* battles creates a "Grand Strategy" feel.

RATING 95%

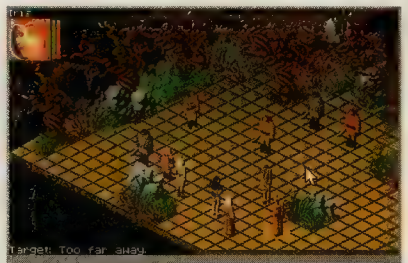
Star Trail: Realms of Arkania

Roleplaying
Sir-tech Software, Inc.
(315) 393-6633

Forget the trend toward simpler roleplaying games that feel more like graphic adventures; *Star Trail* is for serious RPG fans. Based on Germany's popular Das Schwarze Auge (The Black Eye) pen-and-paper system, *Star Trail* is a sprawling fantasy adventure with all the trimmings you'd expect from Sir-tech — plus some pleasant surprises. Travel in cities and dungeons takes place from a smooth-scrolling first-person viewpoint; combat is a top-down, turn-based affair with lots of tactical options; and your characters are rated in more different attributes and skill areas than you can shake a broadsword at. There's also a full-featured automap, and even an automatic journal that takes notes on your encounters and lets you search for specific information you've picked up. Oh, and lest we forget — there's a pretty darn good story, too. It's an amazing accomplishment; *Star Trail* is almost a way of life.



Star Trail, the second chapter in the Realms of Arkania series, is a game for roleplaying purists.



The top-down tactical view gives combat in *Star Trail* a touch of wargaming style.

RATING 88%

Steel Panthers

Wargame
SSI
(408) 737-6800

This is tactical-level combat at its finest; just what you'd expect from the SSI Special Projects Group and Gary Grigsby, designer of *Kampfgruppe*, *Second Front*, and *Pacific War*. There's a wealth of realistic detail here, but the production values and interface have more in common with *Panzer General* than those earlier, hard-core-gamers-only titles. *Steel Panthers* is a pleasure to play, with clean, crisp graphics and utterly convincing sound effects. The library of battles you can fight is varied, and it includes some battles that have never been covered on the PC before. An added attraction is the ability to design your own scenarios, which offers nearly endless possibilities and makes for some really interesting battles that never would've happened in the real world.



SSI's *Steel Panthers* is one of the best tactical-level wargames ever designed for the PC.



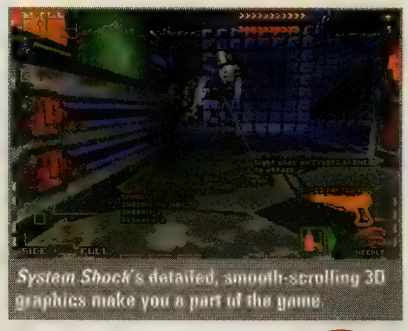
The Battle of Suomussalmi is one of the many and varied battles covered in *Steel Panthers*.

RATING 90%

System Shock

First-person Roleplaying
Origin
(800) 245-4525

Even without a cumbersome headset, *System Shock* is as close to virtual reality as a PC game has ever gotten. As you walk, run, crawl, jump, climb, and shoot your way through this futuristic, first-person action-adventure, you'll be thoroughly sucked into the world of Citadel space station. The game's fictional settings are so vividly realized, you'll remember places you visited in *System Shock* as if you'd been there in real life. The visuals are amazing, with high-res SVGA available in the CD-ROM version; sound effects are terrific; and the amount of control you have over your on-screen persona is unmatched — you can crouch, peek around corners, look up and down, or any combination of the above. No PC game to date creates a stronger sense of *being there*.



System Shock's detailed, smooth-scrolling 3D graphics make you a part of the game.

RATING 96%

THEY RAN THE TWO LARGEST SPY AGENCIES IN THE WORLD.

WILLIAM COLBY

CIA

FORMER DIRECTOR



OLEG KALUGIN

KGB

FORMER MAJOR GENERAL

THIS IS THEIR IDEA OF A GAME.

SPYCRAFT™

THE GREAT GAME

COMING IN FROM THE COLD THIS WINTER

UNCOVER A WEB OF SPIES
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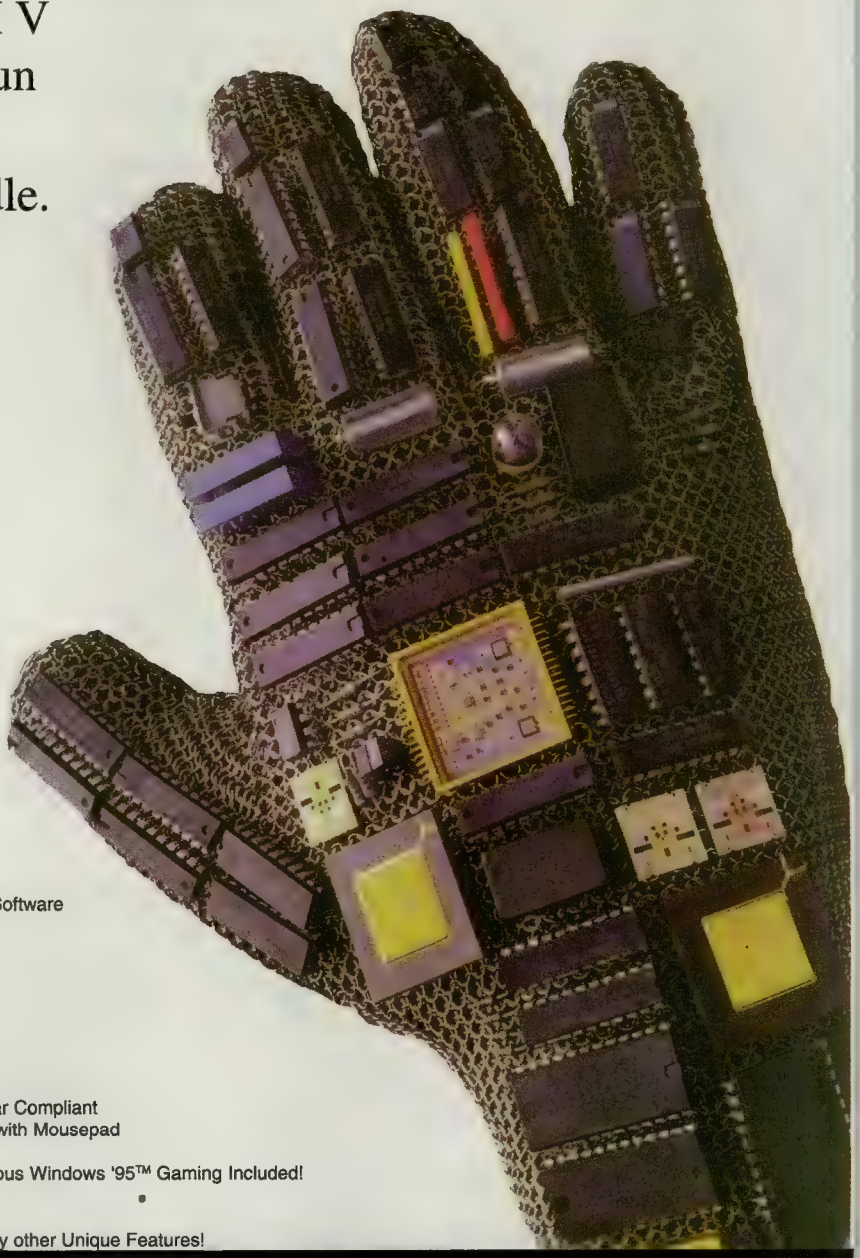
ACTIVISION®

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Product Information Number 90

The only limitation you may encounter playing your games on a Falcon MACH V Gaming PC is that they might run smoother & faster than your hand-eye coordination can handle.

We're working on that.



"Perfection! - This system is well worth the money..."
- Computer Game Review, 100% Rating

The MACH V 133 MHz Pentium™ - $2,995

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Product Information Number 130

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Tony La Russa Baseball 3

Sports Simulation
Electronic Arts
(415) 571-7171

While we weren't too terribly impressed with the first two incarnations of Tony La Russa Baseball, that all changed with the third installment. From its dazzling graphics and exciting action to its deep statistical core and myriad management options, *La Russa 3* is just about the best all-around baseball sim you can get. The player animations are video-based for uncanny realism, and the detailed SVGA screens may make you think you're watching a real ball game on TV. But what really puts *La Russa 3* over the top is its career mode, called the General Manager Challenge. The Challenge lets you take control of a single team for life; as GM, you've got to think about the long haul, assigning scouts to find young players who'll fill out your roster as current players age and retire. The GM Challenge even gives out awards between seasons and maintains a hall of fame. EA and Stormfront Studios score a grand slam with this one.



La Russa 3 can put you behind the pitcher...

... or behind the plate, all in fantastic SVGA.

RATING 95%

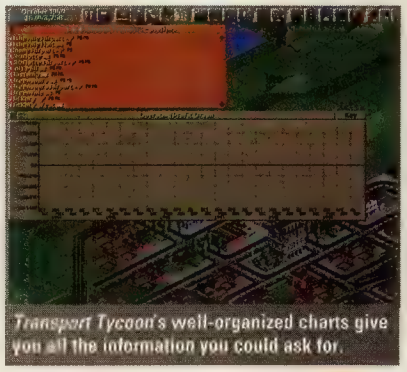
Transport Tycoon

Simulation
MicroProse
(410) 771-0440

Earlier this year MicroProse released *Transport Tycoon,* the heir apparent to Sid Meier's wonderful *Railroad Tycoon,* and expanded on the basic ideas behind the original, giving you more options for your empire-building — not to mention the beautiful high-res graphics and a clean, icon-based interface. You start play in 1930, and your goal, of course, is to become incredibly wealthy by giving the people what they really need: transportation. As the game progresses, you'll create railroads, manage bus and truck routes, and even build major airports. The economic model is even more complex than *Railroad Tycoon*'s; to be really successful, you've got to manage a complex web of industries and raw materials. It's a lot to think about, but a whole slew of charts and graphs help you get the information you need. As your empire grows and the world around you thrives, it comes to life with animations of little trains, planes, and automobiles. You'll be tempted to just sit back and watch them go through their paces, but you've really got to keep on your toes if you want to stay afloat.



In MicroProse's *Transport Tycoon,* you build an empire and watch the city grow with it.



Transport Tycoon's well-organized charts give you all the information you could ask for.

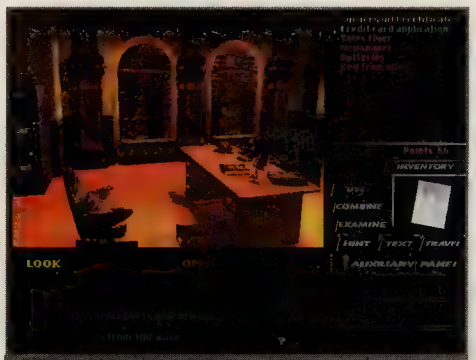
RATING 91%

Under a Killing Moon

Graphic Adventure
Access
(800) 800-4880

Access brought wise-cracking private eye Tex Murphy back in this sequel to *Martian Memorandum,* but *Under a Killing Moon* is light-years ahead of its predecessor in almost every way. This multi-CD extravaganza was one of the first truly effective multimedia games, and it set new standards in interactivity. You can move all around the game's high-res, highly detailed 3D world, and everyone you meet is a real, live person, courtesy of *UAKM*'s extensive use of full-motion video. Professional actors like Brian Keith, Margot Kidder, and Russell Means give the video sequences a Hollywood feel, but it's the great characters, story, and puzzles that make *UAKM* such a satisfying experience.

It's a visit to a funny, bizarre, and very believable virtual world, and one you won't soon forget.



Under a Killing Moon is the latest Tex Murphy graphic adventure from Access.



Brian Keith is one of the pro actors who appear in *UAKM.*

RATING 92%

GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS • GREAT GAMING GIFTS

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Virtual Pool

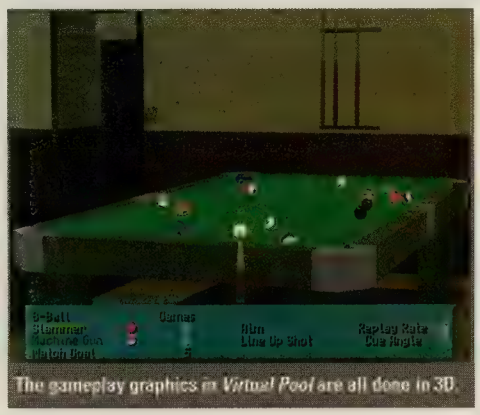
Pool Simulation
Interplay
(800) 969-GAME

You'd think the game of pool would be an easy thing to simulate on a computer — but if that's true, why didn't anyone do it right until this year? The fact is, simulating pool as well as Interplay's *Virtual Pool* does is *not* easy. It might *look* simple, but this game is actually an amazing feat of programming, capturing the



"Machine Gun" Lou lines up a shot in *Virtual Pool*.

sights, sounds, and — most importantly — the physics of pool with uncanny accuracy. When *Virtual Pool* was released, Interplay made the audacious claim that playing their game would actually improve your *real* pool skills; believe it or not, it's true. There's a built-in tutorial included in *Virtual Pool* that has plenty of handy tips for getting the basics down, and with a little multimedia coaching



The gameplay graphics in *Virtual Pool* are all done in 3D.

from none other than pool great "Machine Gun" Lou Butera, you'll be able to learn advanced techniques that you can apply in reallife. But if the computer pool hall is all you need, *Virtual Pool* lets you play a variety of billiard games, or try all kinds of trick shots, and its computerized players and multi-player options mean you'll never have trouble finding an opponent.

RATING 93%

Warcraft: Orcs and Humans

Action/Strategy
Blizzard Entertainment
(714) 556-6671

Warcraft is another real-time wargame with dangerously addictive qualities; many a dispute in our offices centered on who got to play it next. In addition to the usual find-the-enemy-and-crush-him scenarios, *Warcraft* mixes things up with an occasional quest-type mission or dungeon crawl — which is appropriate, considering its heroic-fantasy underpinnings. Besides its exciting blend of strategy and action and its multi-player options, *Warcraft* is full of little touches that attest to the designers' sense of humor and their love for gaming: the goofy, guttural voices of the Orcs, their peevish cries of "Stop poking me!" when you click the mouse on them one time too many times, etc. *Warcraft* is a wonderful game, perfect for anyone who enjoys action, strategy, or fantasy.



Strategy and action meet in Blizzard's *Warcraft*.



The more traditional missions are broken up by quests like this foray into a dungeon.

RATING 92%

Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger

Space Combat
Origin
(512) 335-5200

The first thing everyone notices about *Wing Commander III* is the full-motion video, with bona fide movie stars like Malcolm McDowell, Mark Hammill, and John Rhys-Davies. And it *is* impressive; the writing, directing, acting and special effects are on a level with many sci-fi movies and TV shows. But what makes *WCIII* stand out from the other video extravaganzas lurking on the shelves is



The polygon-based graphics in *WCIII* are far superior to those in the previous games.

that there's actually a *game* to play between the live-action sequences — a game that could've been successful even without the Hollywood chrome. *WCIII* improves on the first two Wing Commander games with 3D, texture-mapped graphics in the space combat scenes, and a great-looking high-res SVGA mode for gamers with fast machines. *WCIII* is still the reigning champion of space shoot-'em-ups, and it belongs in every gamer's collection.



Wing III's full-motion video sequences tell the game's story in spectacular style.

RATING 96%

And there you have it. The cream of the crop, the best of the best. If you didn't find anything to ask Santa for in these pages, we've got some shocking news for you: You don't like PC games.

Happy shopping!

BEFORE YOU PLAY FOOTBALL PRO '96 YOU'D BETTER PUT ON ONE OF THESE.







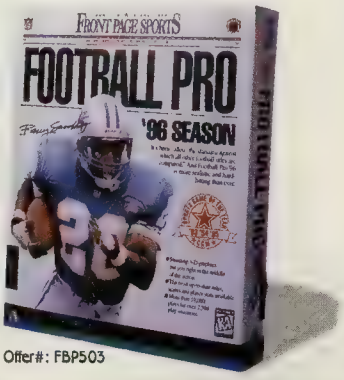
Computer Gaming World's BEST Sports Simulation Game Three Years Running, Passing and Punting.

HOW do you think Barry Sanders would do against the Eagles' **FOUR MAN FRONT** in a short yardage situation? After **FIVE** straight carries? In a driving snowstorm? Sierra's Football Pro '96 knows.

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Product Information Number 209

If you could feel what they feel....

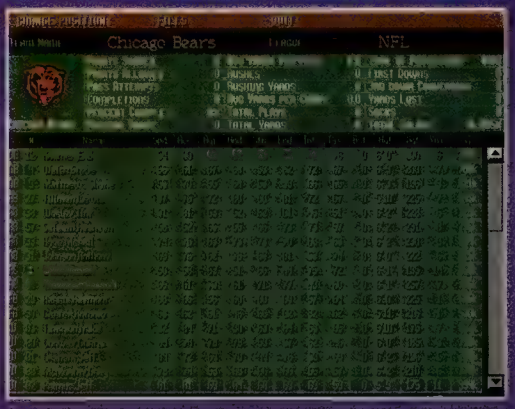
The crush of helmets, the thud of pads, the smooth silk of the ball as it settles into your waiting hands. The grass falling away behind you as you run.

The sheer joy of playing the best game in the whole world.

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS 96



Take on the best of the NFL! All-new player animations and realism are your ticket to true NFL football competition – a quantum leap over its predecessors!



If you really want to take charge, the expanded General Manager and stats options put all the excitement and strategy right at your fingertips!

Special Limited Time Offer. Competitive Upgrade Offer! Good Only Until November 30, 1995. Call 1.800.245.7744 Mention offer number UR96-112.

Owners of previous versions of Unnecessary Roughness or any existing PC football game can upgrade. For 800# orders you must have a copy of the previous or competitive product with you to verify ownership.



Just when you need to jam it over the line or flatten a tackler, the new "Oomph" button delivers!



Go into action with 30 NFL teams and more than 1300 NFL stars. Unnecessary Roughness '96 has it all!



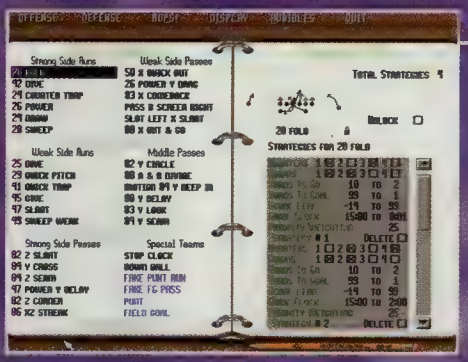
Develop a devastating offense and a smothering defense with the most complete set of play design tools.



Enjoy the fast-action automatic pass reception, or keep your opponent on his toes with the real-time "Pro" passing mode.



See every play up close and personal – back angles, reverse angles, side angles, even helmet cameras!



Set up your game plan; even add audibles! Test your plays against any kind of lineup. You're in control, right down to the nitty gritty!



Check out the game summaries and look over stats during season play. Over 100 different stats and ratings!

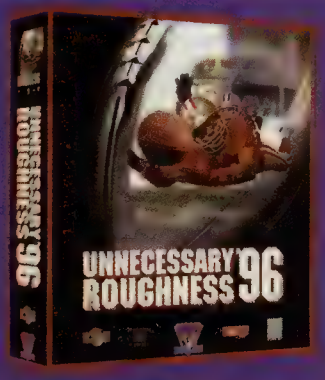


With:
- new player animations
- league-leading stats
- expanded plays
- General Manager options

Unnecessary Roughness '96 delivers the ultimate in hard-hitting football action!



The replays are almost as much fun as the plays themselves! See action on-screen like never before with unlimited camera angles!

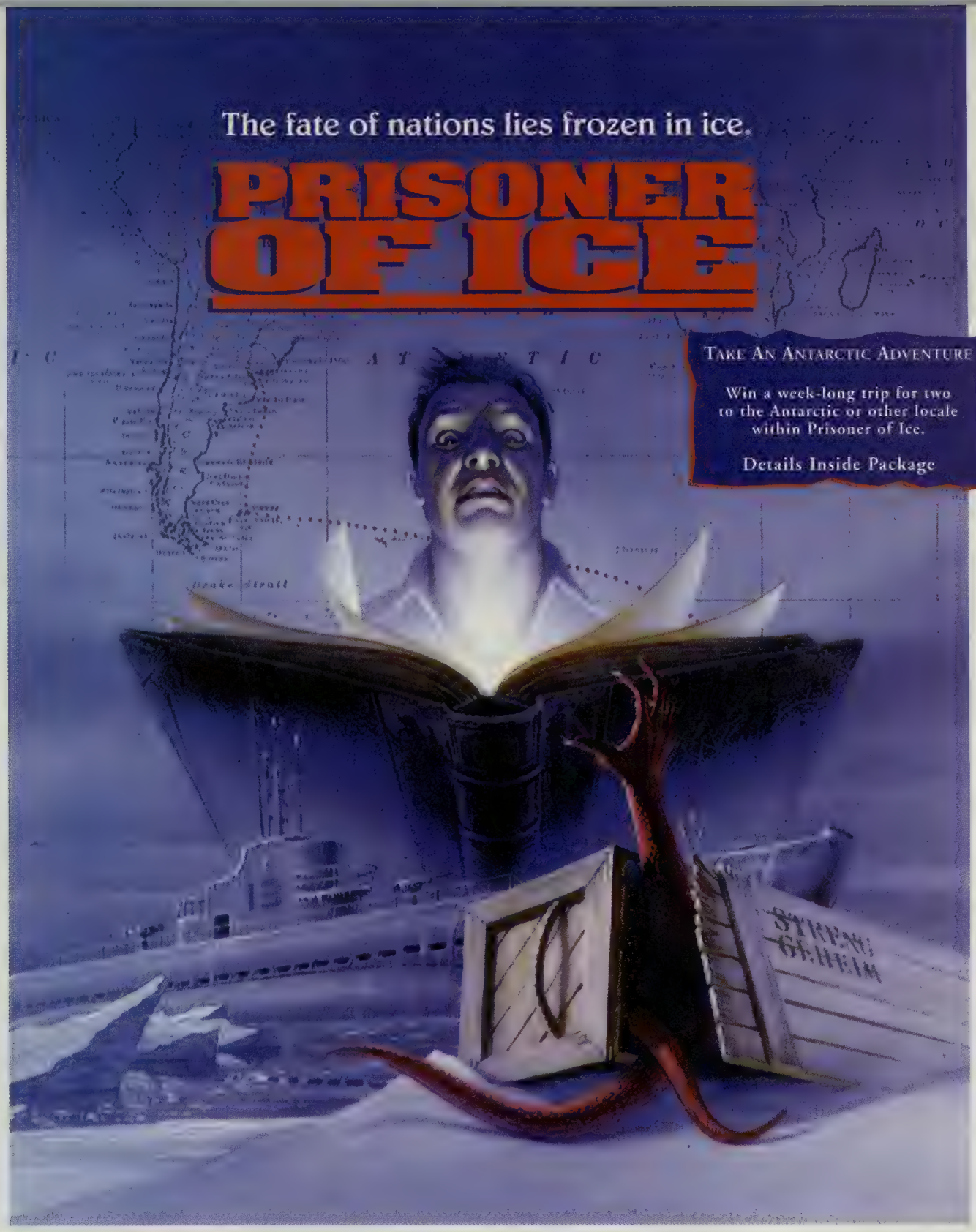


Team NFL

PLAYERS

SPORT ACCOLADE

Product Information Number 87



Amid an atmosphere of suspense and intrigue, you'll launch your voyage in the icy cold wastelands of the Antarctic aboard a Royal Navy submarine, where World War II looms ahead and your every move could change the course of history.

To place an order or for more information call: 800-443-3386.

PC CD-ROM This epic adventure is now available on PC CD-ROM.

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I•MOTION INTERACTIVE

Product Information Number 147

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

excellent extras

by the PC Gamer Staff

If you've made it this far through our Holiday Extravaganza, you've probably already decided on your top software picks, so it's time to turn your attention to peripherals. We've compiled a list of our favorites that cover a wide range of prices and tastes, so before you spend your holiday cash on inferior products, be sure and take a look at *PC Gamer*'s picks.

Joysticks, Driving Wheels, and Gamepads

The best computer games are a hands-on experience, so you've probably already invested in a joystick or gamepad. But if you're like many gamers, you've probably shortchanged yourself in this area, buying the simplest (and cheapest) controller you could find. Nothing can enhance the computer game experience more than a high-quality joystick or gamepad, so here are a few we've come to rely on.

FLCS-16

Thrustmaster Corporation
(800) 468-3775
$199.95

Although they're starting to lose ground to newer joysticks from Logitech, Suncom, and Microsoft, the Thrustmaster line of joysticks is still a great choice for anyone looking for a solid, reliable controller.

When it comes to the ultimate in PC control devices, Thrustmaster's latest stick — the FLCS-16 — is a fine addition to any fighter-jock's arsenal. Fully compatible with both the WCS Mark II Weapons Control System and the new Throttle Quadrant System, the FLCS-16 is one of the most potent sticks on the market. With its two-stage trigger, four-way switches, and three additional buttons, the fully programmable FLCS-16 does exactly what it's supposed to do: it helps give you the utmost control without having to take your eyes off your target.

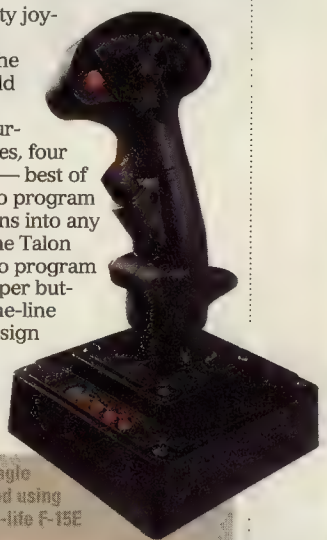


Fans of Thrustmaster's top-of-the-line joystick, the FLCS-16, might be interested in this special edition of the FLCS. But since it's limited to 500 units and sells for around $500, you'll have to be a very dedicated gamer to land one.

F-15E Talon/Eagle

Suncom
(800) 228-7449
$129.99/$199.99

Suncom has raised the stakes in the fight for your gaming dollar with their Strike Eagle series of controllers. These high-quality joysticks come jam-packed with all the features you could possibly want, including two four-way "hat" switches, four fire buttons, and — best of all — the ability to program keyboard functions into any of these. While the Talon only allows you to program in one keystroke per button, the top-of-the-line Eagle lets you assign entire strings of keyboard commands to a single button.



The entire Strike Eagle series was designed using specs from the real-life F-15E Strike Eagle jet.

F-16 Throttle Quadrant System

Thrustmaster
(800) 468-3775
$199.95

We were pretty blown away when we got our hands on Thrustmaster's latest weapons control system, the F-16 Throt-

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

tle Quadrant System. This impressive looking controller sets new standards in quality and functionality. Modeled after the real-life throttle quadrant from the F-16, the TQS has a solid, high-quality feel, and comes feature-packed with a total of six programmable knobs, switches and buttons located on the very comfortable grip. The part we like best is the tiny targeting trackball, which sits conveniently under your thumb and works as a mouse, letting you lock on to targets with high precision in those demanding flight sims. The only drawback to the TQS is that it must be used in conjunction with Thrustmaster's FCLS-16 joystick (it's not compatible with other sticks), and with a street price for the pair running close to $300 bucks, you'll have to be a very dedicated fighter jock to part with the cash.



The F-16 TQS is one of the finest controllers we've ever seen, but it's also one of the most expensive at around $200.

Competition Driving System

Extreme Competition Controls
(612) 824-6733
$439.95

The Competition Driving System is the first line of products from a relatively small company — Extreme Competition Controls — but if the quality of these products is any indication, we'll be hearing big things from ECC. Consisting of both a driving wheel and pedal setup, the CDS is a racing nut's dream. The steering wheel is about as heavy-duty as you can get; it feels like it's been pulled straight from a Formula 1 racer. The pedals have an equally substantial feel, and they're thoughtfully designed with a nice incline and an even feel throughout their range of travel. With a retail price of $439 for the pair, the CDS is definitely on the high end of the price spectrum, but if you demand the most from your driving games, this is the ultimate setup.



While the Competition Driving System runs circles around other driving peripherals, the price — $439 — may be a bit too steep for all but the die-hard driving fan.

Formula T2 Driving Wheel & Pedals

Thrustmaster
(800) 468-3775
$179.95

Looking for a good driving setup to get you through your favorite driving game? Well, Thrustmaster has been hard at work updating their popular Formula T1 driving system with a number of features that make it an even better value than before. This new system is called Formula T2, and should come in at around the same price as the T1. What you'll get is a little more padding on the steering wheel, a sharper, smoother gear-shift, and redesigned pedals that work much more smoothly than their predecessors.

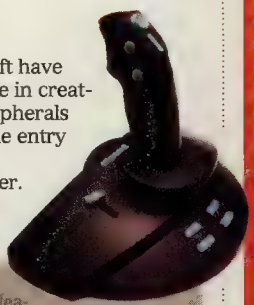


The Formula T2 driving system from Thrustmaster should come in at around the same price as the original T1.

Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro

Microsoft Corporation
(206) 882-8080
$59.95

The folks at Microsoft have used their experience in creating high-quality peripherals to bring an incredible entry to gaming with the Microsoft SideWinder. This one has a few new features that'll change the way you look at joysticks (for starters, it's digital) and prepare the way for gaming under Windows 95. But since the digital technology it was designed to take advantage of isn't widely applied just yet, Microsoft made sure the SideWinder would work as a native analog joystick, too. It feels great, it works perfectly, and it can emulate either the Thrustmaster FCS or CH Products' Flightstick Pro, giving



The Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro is a feature-packed joystick with a modest price.

Stocking Stuffers

Trackman Marble

Logitech
(510) 795-8500
$99

The TrackMan Marble is a thumb-operated trackball that uses a laser-like beam of light to sense the movement of the ball. This replaces all the mechanical parts associated with normal mouse movement, increasing precision and reliability. Because of the way it senses movement, it's virtually dirt-proof — no regular cleaning required.

The TrackMan Marble also features three programmable buttons. You can even program a button to issue a double-click for ease of opening applications in Windows.



Logitech has always made high-quality peripherals for the PC, and the TrackMan Marble is no exception.

Interactor Cushion

Aura Systems, Inc.
(310) 643-5300
$99

Aura Systems has come out with the Interactor Cushion, a virtual reality accessory designed to let you feel what you're playing. It's a home-based twist on Sensurround.

The Cushion is simply that: a pad you place at the back of your favorite computer chair and plug into an audio output. The audio signals are converted using Aura's patented electromagnetic actuator technology (an outgrowth of a U.S. military project) and provide a pulse to your body that's synchronized with the soundtrack.

It's the same technology currently being used in the "Theater of Time" attraction at the Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas. It can also be used with standard audio recordings to enhance your listening pleasure.



Not only does the Interactor Cushion add to your gaming experience, it provides pretty good lumbar support.

Continued on page 147

second-guessing refs and snarfing down pretzels is nothin'.

try making 300 critical calls in under 20 seconds each while answering to a side of beef.



SUPER BOWL XXX SWEEPSTAKES

TRY THIS ONE:

A Redskin punt touches a 49er blocker downfield. A Redskin picks up the ball and runs into the end zone. What's the call? The right answer could land you and a friend in Arizona next January for Super Bowl XXX.

- Redskins' ball; at spot of recovery
- Redskins' ball; after 5 yd. penalty from spot of recovery
- TD Redskins
- 49ers' ball; at spot of recovery

Hint: The correct answer is printed on the NFL Instant Replay packages found at your local software retailer.

No purchase necessary. Sweepstakes ends 12/31/95. Call 1-800-340-7888 for entry details.

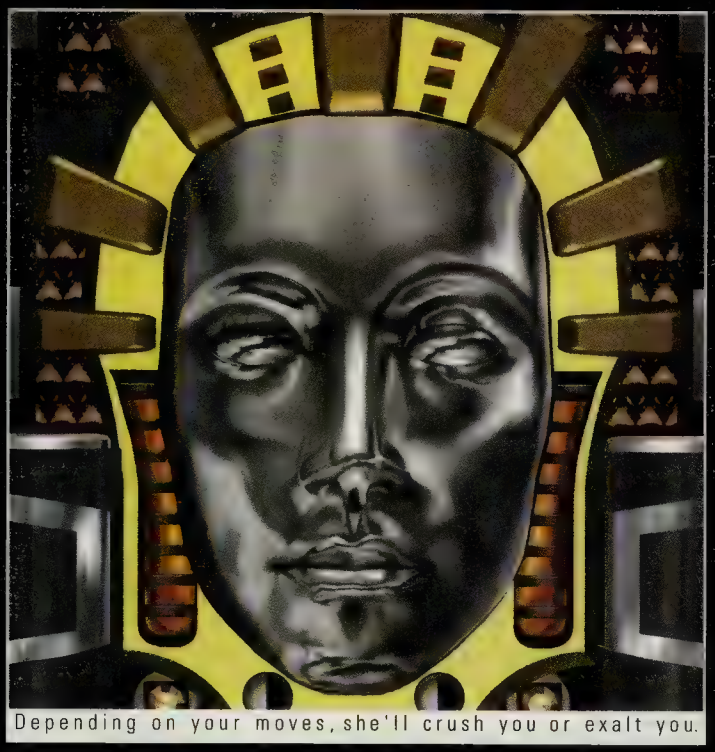


If you're an indecisive twit, move on. NFL Instant Replay's the real thing. Over 300 full-motion video NFL plays on PC CD-ROM, narrated by Pat Summerall. But it's not enough to be right. You've got to be fast. Pitted against the clock or a buddy, choose the right answer and move through the regular season, playoffs and into the Super Bowl round. Dispute a ruling? Consult the complete NFL rule book that's included in hypertext form. But why? You're a walking rule book, right?

INSTANT NFL REPLAY

PHILIPS

Product Information Number 189



Depending on your moves, she'll crush you or exalt you.

All your twisted dreams of power.
Granted.

All your schizo-paranoiac fantasies.
Free rein.

All your enemies, and all their enemies, and so on and so on and so on.
Broken.

All your damp, dark, chaotic longings to control the universe.
Be careful what you wish for.

INTO THE VOID

The first net-capable, intergalactic, PC CD-ROM game of ultimate strategy.

Enter at your own risk. October '95.

Adrenalin™ ENTERTAINMENT

ROGUE

Playmates Interactive Entertainment, Inc.
16200 Trojan Way
La Mirada, CA 90638
(714) 562-1743

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Product Information Number 193

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

you the versatility you need to play DOS games that support only one joystick or the other. (For more on the Sidewinder, check out the Peripheral Visions column on page 298.)

Wingman Extreme

Logitech
(510) 795-8500
$59.95

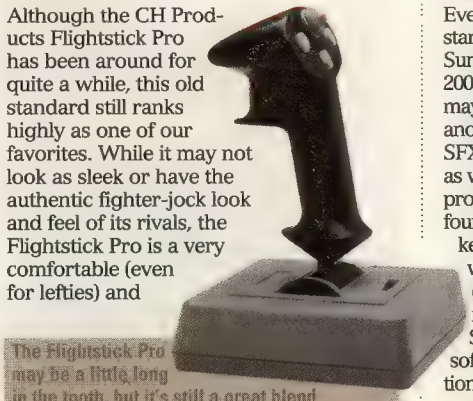
Logitech knocked one out of the park with their Wingman series of joysticks. These elegantly designed and solidly constructed joysticks have the look and feel of sticks costing nearly twice the price, with performance that you'll definitely appreciate. The lower-priced stick, the $29.95 Wingman, is a simple two-button joystick that brings a high level of quality to the low-end joystick market.

But if you've got a little extra pocket change and want to get the most bang for your buck, the Wingman Extreme is definitely the way to go. The Extreme is a four-button joystick that comes complete with a hat switch and is compatible with software designed for the Thrustmaster FCS. After putting in more than a few hundred hours of flight time with the Extreme in joystick-busting sims like LucasArts' *TIE Fighter* and *Falcon 3.0*, we've come to appreciate the exceptional comfort of the Extreme's molded handgrip and smooth action. In our opinion, the Wingman and the Extreme are easily two of the best joysticks on the market.

Flightstick Pro

CH Products
(619) 598-2518
$59.95

Although the CH Products Flightstick Pro has been around for quite a while, this old standard still ranks highly as one of our favorites. While it may not look as sleek or have the authentic fighter-jock look and feel of its rivals, the Flightstick Pro is a very comfortable (even for lefties) and durable stick that quite simply does everything it's supposed to do. Sporting four buttons, a throttle and a four-way hat switch, the Flightstick Pro also has the advantage of being widely supported in a number of flight-sims and action games.



The Flightstick Pro may be a little long in the tooth, but it's still a great blend of price and quality.

PC GamePad

Advanced Gravis
(800) 663-8558
$19.95

If you've been reading *PC Gamer* for a while, you already know our opinion of Advanced Gravis' Gamepad. We love it. This is simply one of the best-designed and most versatile pieces of hardware you can own. This simple — but surprisingly effective — four-button controller gives you complete control over everything from fast action games like *Doom* and *Heretic* to demanding sports sims like *NHL '96*. And with a street price of around $15, you basically have nothing to lose by picking up a Gamepad.



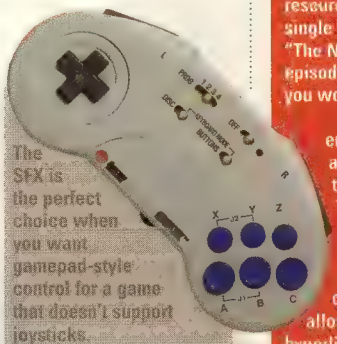
This is one of our favorite controllers of all time, and at $19.95, worth every penny.

SFX 2000

Suncom
(800) 228-7449
$24.95

Now that we've confessed our undying love for Advanced Gravis' Gamepad, we've got another confession to make. Ever since we started using Suncom's SFX 2000, we think we may have found another love. The SFX is an eight-button gamepad that, as far as we know, is the first to offer the ability to program each of the eight buttons (*and* the four-way directional pad) with any desired keyboard command. Add to that a four-way switch for choosing between programs, and you've got a total of 48 commands at your disposal. Better yet, the SFX doesn't require any memory-robbing software to run; it simply stores the information in memory onboard the SFX.

After programming the SFX for Origin's action hit *Crusader*, (which unfortunately



The SFX is the perfect choice when you want gamepad-style control for a game that doesn't support joysticks.

continued from page 144

Batter Up

Sports Sciences, Inc.
(216) 963-0660
$99

Practice getting down that picture-perfect swing with Sports Sciences' Batter Up. It's a life-size, soft-foam bat embedded with a motion sensor, and it's compatible with *Microsoft Baseball*, *Hardball 3 & 4*, *Front Page Sports Baseball*, and the *Tony LaRussa* series, and it's packaged with *ESPN Baseball Tonight*. Using one of these games for the PC, you can swing at the incoming pitch instead of using a gamepad or clicking on a mouse. And for fielding, you can use the buttons on the bat's handle rather than switch to another controller.



The Batter Up controller adds a new dimension to baseball games.

Star Trek Omnipedia

Simon & Schuster Interactive
(800) 983-5333
$79.95

The *Star Trek Omnipedia* is the definitive resource for any Star Trek fan. Contained on a single CD is information on the original series, "The Next Generation" and the first 20 episodes of "Deep Space Nine." There's little you won't find here.

There are different modes for referencing this massive amount of data, from alphabetical indexes of names, places, things and events involving the Star Trek universe to backgrounds on the actors and the history of the universe — from its inception 15 billion years ago through the Trek era, to the 123rd century. Many words are highlighted, allowing hyperlinks to related topics.



The *Star Trek Omnipedia* has enough info to satisfy the most ardent Trek fan.

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PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

doesn't include its own joystick support), we found that it more than paid for itself when blasting through consortium labs. Judging by the response this gamepad has already gotten, Suncom should have their hands full trying to fill orders for the SFX for quite some time.

CH Throttle/ CH Pro Throttle

CH Products
(619) 598-2518
$99.95/$139.95

We've only recently had some hands-on fun with CH Products' newest peripherals, the CH Throttle and the CH Throttle Pro, and we've got to say they've already become favorites among the *PC Gamer* staff. The comfortable, sleek design of both products puts them ahead of Thrustmaster's WCS MkII and make them a great alternative to the very expensive Thrustmaster TQS. The Throttle has twelve programmable features, including a four-way hat switch and two-way button, and the Throttle Pro has 20 user-programmable buttons with 4 four-way switches. Best of all, you'll be able to use either with any joystick or flight yoke. Just a word of warning: you'll need big hands to reach most of the buttons on these controllers.



The $139.95 CH Pro Throttle is a solid contender to Thrustmaster's WCS and TQS, with plenty of features you'll need for some bogey-busting fun.

Virtual Reality Headsets

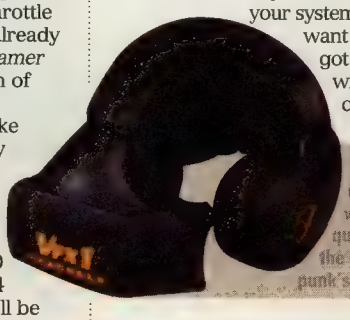
Much has been made of virtual reality in recent years, and with all the jargon-driven hype created by the press, you'd think we'd be hip-deep in VR goodies by now. In the real world, however, VR is still in the early stages of its development with only a few products on the market that actually provide a taste of how exciting the world of VR can be. Here are two we think are worth a look.

Forte VFX-1

Forte Technologies
(716) 427-8595
$995

Forte Technologies offering to the virtual reality craze is the VFX-1 headset. Unlike the Virtual i-O's design, which allows peripheral vision into the real world, the philosophy behind the VFX-1 is to completely immerse the gamer in a virtual environment; and it certainly does that. Using cushy built-in headphones with a flip-up visor, you'll feel surrounded by sights and sounds. The 3D Stereoscopic Flip-Up Smart Visor, offers a 45-degree field of vision, and the VOS circuitry follows your head's movements through a full 360 degrees of yaw and +/-70 degrees of pitch or roll. The VFX-1 .7" dual active-matrix color LCDs for viewing and has a built-in microphone to provide hands-free communication with other gamers or voice-recognition systems.

The headset plugs into its own 16-bit interface card, so you'll need a slot free in your system — you'll also want to be sure you've got a VGA card with a free feature connector.



With its fully immersive field of view and high-quality headphones, the VFX-1 is a cyberpunk's dream.

Virtual i/O i-glasses!

Virtual i/O
(206) 382-7410
$799

The other virtual reality-check comes from Virtual i-O's i-glasses! headset. Weighing in at only eight ounces, it resembles more of a fancy ViewMaster with headphones attached than the standard head-encompassing VR set design, and it can be used with regular glasses. It also utilizes two .7" color LCDs and the same degrees of movement as the VFX-1. The light weight of the i-glasses! helps minimize the effects of vertigo and motion sickness.



Virtual i/O's i-glasses! are the preferred VR headsets of the Yeti.

...continued from page 147

Head 2 Head Game Kit

FormGen, Inc.
(602) 443-4109
$39.95

FormGen's Head 2 Head Game Kit is a package for linking up two PCs using a 30 ft. cable for going one-on-one with multi-player games that support serial links. The kit also comes with LapLink software, which lets you transfer files from one PC to another. And if you're looking for some games, the kit also comes with a CD that includes Apogee's *Rise of the Triad: The Hunt Begins*, id's *Doom*, and Blizzard's *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*.



If you don't have access to a network or modem, you can still enjoy multi-player gaming with the Head 2 Head Game Kit.

The Game Runner

Quarterdeck
(310) 392-9851
$59.95

If you frequently run into memory problems and you're not quite ready for Window 95, you may find the answers you seek in Quarterdeck's *The Game Runner*, which combines the excellent *QEMM* memory manager, their *Aldridge Cache86* and *AXIS: The Gamecheater* in one handy package.

The *Aldridge Cache86* is a memory caching utility that loads frequently accessed data into RAM, elimmating the need to read it from the hard-drive. This speeds up games, especially when you're waiting around for scenes or scenarios to load.

The Gamecheater is the real jewel in this package; it's a game utility that actually lets you go inside many of your favorite games and alter them to give yourself more money, greater strength, a higher number items or just about anything that has a numerical value. The game must specifically be supported by *The Gamecheater*, but Quarterdeck says the list of supported games is growing daily.

The Game Runner is less expensive than Quarterdeck's *QEMM v.7.5* package, and includes some game-enhancing software.



...continued on page 150

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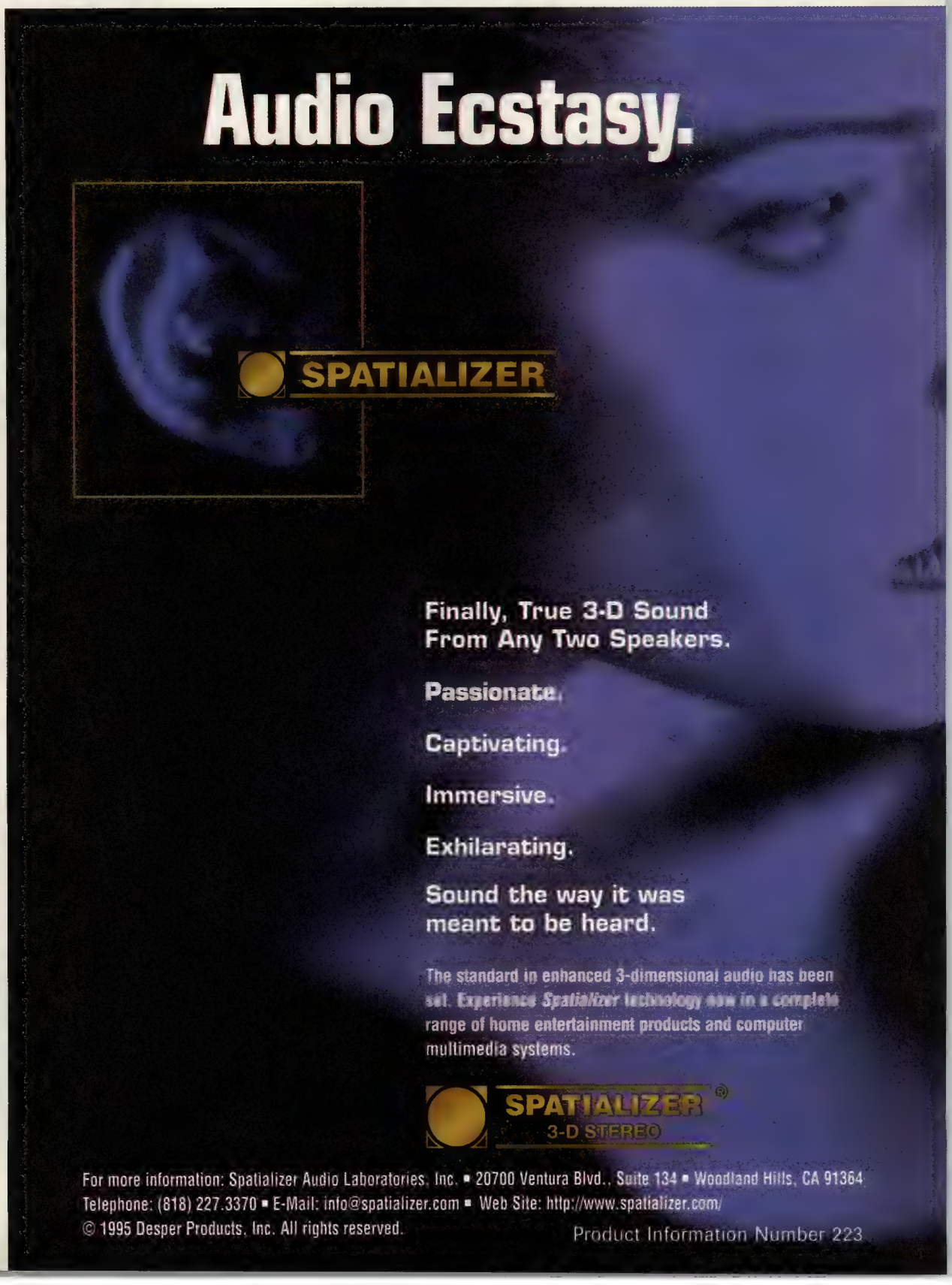
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Telephone: (818) 227.3370 • E-Mail: info@spatializer.com • Web Site: http://www.spatializer.com/

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Product Information Number 223

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Speakers

Speakers are fun; it's no secret that they're one of our favorite PC accessory categories. With all the different types available, it must be one of the largest and most confusing peripheral markets around. And nothing can enhance the gaming experience like a great set of speakers — those loud thumping sound effects and crystal clear tones are the icing on the cake.

Altec Lansing ACS500/ACS300

Altec Lansing
(800) 648-6663
$200/$450

Altec Lansing has always offered a wide range of speakers, and if you've been reading the magazine, you know they come highly recommended by the *PC Gamer* staff — never more so than this year, when we saw their new high-end model, the ACS500, a three-piece system with an 18-watt subwoofer and two tall satellite speakers that don't take up too much valuable desktop space. The satellite speakers are designed so each speaker throws sound out in several directions to create theater-style Dolby Surround sound. It's a beaut!



The bevelled design of these tall speakers works to create true surround sound quality for the ACS500 series.

If that's too rich for your blood, Altec has several other three-piece systems in the $180 - $300 range, all of which produce a very full sound. We'd recommend the ACS3 model for around $200. It comes with a 15-watt subwoofer and two clam-shell speakers.



These clam-shell speakers may look small, but take it from us — they can really pump out some sound.

LCS-3210

Labtec
(360) 896-2000
$119.99

Labtec, long known for their line of entry-level speaker systems, is stepping up their efforts to produce a more high-end line of speakers geared toward both the audiophile and the computer gamer who demands quality sound. Their top-of-the-line system is the LCS-3210, which uses Spatializer 3D-Sound to create the feel of room-filling surround sound with just two speakers — at slightly more than $100, that ain't bad.



Surround sound with two speakers? Check out these LCS-3210 speakers at your local computer store, and see if you believe your ears.

J-902 System

Jazz Speakers
(818) 336-2689
$199.95

Jazz joins the subwooofer wars with their excellent J-902 system. The two 5-watt satellite speakers are nothing to write home about — they're not even Jazz's top of the line — but the 18-watt subwoofer backs up their thin low end to give them a full, powerful sound even at low volume. And unlike most subwoofers for computers, the J-902 has a wooden cabinet, which seems to give it a natural resonance. The J-902 sounds at least as good as the very popular Altec Lansing subwoofer system, and better than most others.



Jazz Speakers' J-902 System is a great-sounding trio of speakers — and not a bad bargain, either.

continued from page 148

Doom Construction Kit

Waite Group Press
(800) 788-3123
$24.95

The *Doom Construction Kit* is the ultimate kit for those of us who can't get enough levels of *Doom*. The kit not only includes numerous custom-made levels (.WAD files), but all the tools and instructions needed to roll your own.



Seen those *Doom* .WADs and think you can do better, or just think it'd be cool to try? The best way to find out is to pick up the *Doom Construction Kit*.

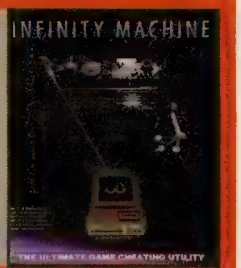
Infinity Machine

REM Software
(802) 247-4326
$39

If you're finding a game too tough or just want that unfair advantage, REM software has the solution. The *Infinity Machine* — it's the best game enhancing editor around — bar none.

Basically, the *Infinity Machine* will let you search for known numerical values such as money, movement or strength and change them to your liking. You can also search for unknown "meter bar" values such as health, shields, etc. It does it all and does it well. Even while playing, you can hit a hot key and jump into the editor (the game will automatically pause), make changes and return to the game. You can even freeze variables such as locking your health at 100%.

Once loaded, the *Infinity Machine* stays in upper memory (uses only 25K of RAM) which won't slow down your game performance, works with all DOS extenders, and when you're satisfied with your changes, you can save them to a file and load them next time you play. And best of all, it works with virtually any game that has alterable variables, so you don't have to buy upgrades to keep up with the latest games.



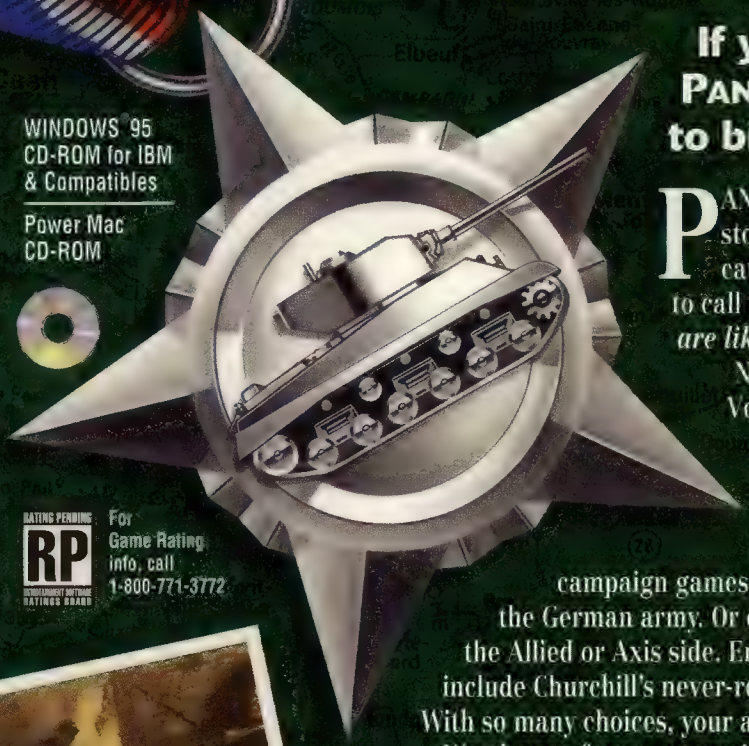
If you want to be a real sneak, the *Infinity Machine* can even be used during a network game. You can change variables while you play and fry your opponent.

ALLIED GENERAL

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WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM for IBM & Compatibles

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If you were blown away by PANZER GENERAL™, you'll be blown to bits by ALLIED GENERAL™!

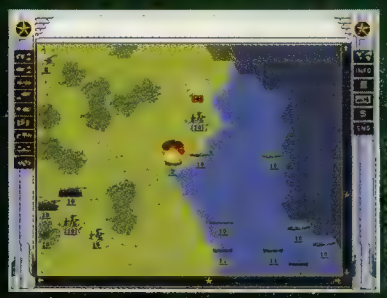
PANZER GENERAL took the gaming world by storm. It established an entirely new game category, prompting *Computer Gaming World* to call it, "*...such fun that even non-wargamers are likely to find themselves hooked.*"

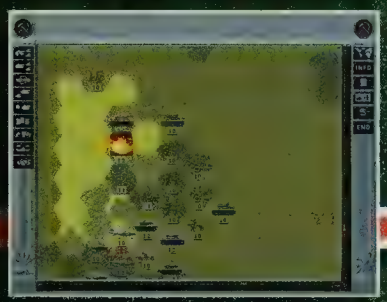
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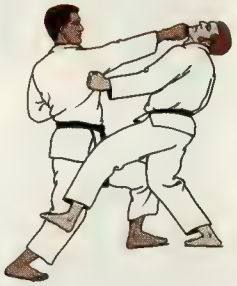
A MINDSCAPE® COMPANY

STANDARD GUIDE FOR CHOKING VICTIMS

YOUR VICTIM IS NOT CHOKING YET.
YOU MUST ACT FAST. EVERY SECOND COUNTS.



STEP 1 To initiate choking, tilt victim's head back using heel of foot. Proceed to lodge foot in victim's mouth, removing any excess teeth, as they may impair steps 2, 3, and 4.



STEP 2 Insert fist into mouth and probe for bronchial tubes. When found, grab tightly and pull out through nose.

Supreme Warrior and Digital Pictures are trademarks of Digital Pictures, Inc. ©1994, 1995 Digital Pictures Inc. All rights reserved.



STEP 3 If no gagging sounds can be heard, administer 4 sharp blows to victim's larynx with heel of foot. Note: A purplish color on victim's face is desired as it indicates that choking is not entirely due to foot odor.



STEP 4 If victim is still not choking, turn upside down and shake vigorously until spleen is lodged in throat.

IF VICTIM DOES NOT BEGIN TO CHOKE REPEAT THIS 4-STEP SEQUENCE. DO NOT GIVE UP.













BIMA GAME OF THE YEAR

MATURE M

Practice these moves only in the new Supreme Warrior CD-ROM. Featuring some of the most ass-kicking martial arts action to ever come out of Hong Kong. The only high-speed fighting game that immerses you in the authentic look, sound, feel and fury of a classic martial arts film. Using lightning fists, whirling kicks and an arsenal of bone-crushing secret moves, you battle experts in the disciplins of Mongolian Boxing, Wu Shu and Kung Fu. Defeat them and you will be awarded gifts of special moves and powers. Definitely not recommended for the weak of heart.

SUPREME WARRIOR

MS-DOS, WINDOWS 95, MACINTOSH CD-ROM 1-800-332-0032 web site: http://www.digipix.com e-mail: digipix@digipix.com

If you think this poster is even remotely serious maybe you should contact one of those daytime talk shows and [illegible] be for the episode "Incredibly gullible people and the mates who savage off them."

Product Information Number 121

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Product Information Number 126

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

unexpected pleasures

by Lance Elko

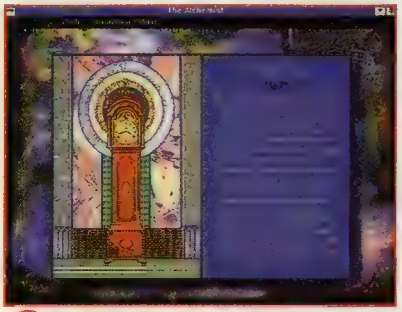
You're a gamer, so we know what makes up the bulk of your software library, but...

We're betting you have some non-gaming CD-ROMs, too — *Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Microsoft's *Cinemania*, that sort of thing. And you've probably discovered that some of them can be as much fun as a good game. That's why we scanned the market for entertaining programs you won't find on the game shelves, programs that cater to a wide variety of tastes and interests. We found some live-wires that are fun and engaging — and while they might be labeled as reference, education, or even as applications, you're bound to be entertained.

The Alchemist

Enteractive
(800) 452-9999

Okay, maybe it's risky to lead off with a program that many gamers are bound to disdain, but what the heck ... we have no control over the alphabetical sequencing of these titles. *The Alchemist* is a new-age CD-ROM that you'll like if you have interest in things like Karl Jung's theory of synchronicity. This title is graphically stunning — one of the prettiest we've seen — and is used primarily to provide Tarot-style readings. You use earth, air, fire, and water cards to receive sage advice on questions about your finances, relationships, career, and the like. While it's easy to dismiss this as gobbledygook, the program has a serene, meditative quality that pulls you in. If personal enlightenment through the age-old techniques of alchemy sounds cool, you'll like this.



Each of the four elements in *The Alchemist* offer a zenlike response.

The Beer Hunter

Discovery Channel Multimedia
(800) 762-2189

The perfect beer — that's host Michael Jackson's self-described lifelong quest. Based on The Discovery Channel's five-part series of the same name (also hosted by Jackson), *The Beer Hunter* takes you through the history of beer and the art of brewing, much the same way that the TV series did. It's interesting, if a little static. But the real strength of the program is the Field Guide, which covers 180 microbreweries from all regions of the U.S. You learn about each of the brews from these micros, as well as Jackson's favorite 24 beers. He tells why these are his favorites, offering details about the body, color, taste, etc. If you're in search of selective suds, this is the disc.



British beer critic Michael Jackson is the talking head throughout the program. He takes his hops seriously, and his Top 24 microbrews are worth checking out if you're looking for a new drinking pleasure.

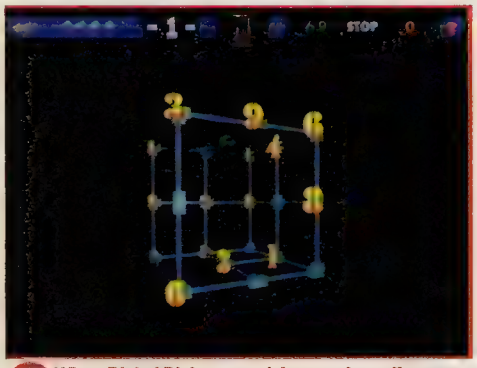
Digital Digits

Milennium Media Group
(800) 892-6848

OK, OK, we said we're not covering games here, but this one's not the kind you usually see covered in *PC Gamer*. Like its sister title, *Word War 5*, *Digital Digits* was created by French puzzle master Pierre Berloquin. The premise is simple enough — create patterns of numbers in which adjacent digits must be separated by at least one number (1 and 3 would be no-no's for 2, and an 8 or 0 would be prohibited next to a 9, for

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

example). The going gets tough when you begin to encounter complex three-dimensional grids, some with elliptical shapes. You can also alter the rules to modify the challenge. If you like brain-busters, this one's got the right stuff.



When *Digital Digits* starts giving you three-dimensional grids, the puzzles get tougher. This is one of the easier puzzles to solve.

Echo Lake

Delrina
(800) 734-2330

This multimedia family album has wonderful appeal for those who keep childhood photos, go to reunions, and remember their grandmother's maiden name. In other words, most of us. *Echo Lake*, a Windows-based CD-ROM, provides a clever interface that uses the den of a vacation cabin as a metaphor. A desk, bookcase, and photograph on the wall are the keys to assembling and viewing photos, videos, personal notes, letters, and everything else that helps chronicle a family or group history. You can build a collection on one person that's represented as one volume of many on the bookshelf, and modify it at any time. It's feature-packed, but you'll need a video-capture board, scanner, and microphone to really make full use of it. *Echo Lake* is down-home hi-tech that's truly fun to use.



A rustic cabin metaphor offers all the tools you need to create a multimedia family album. Each book on the shelf in the background represents an individual's profile (we've started work on three), and you can fill the shelves if you've got a large family or group.

The Greatest Paper Airplanes

Mindscape
(800) 234-3088

Sure, there's still a kid in all of us. We all sailed paper missiles helter-skelter in some elementary school classroom. This Mindscape disc for Windows-based machines offers you the chance to do it right. *Really* right. There are directions for 50 models, covering different classes of craft, such as gliders, darts, fighters, and starships. You get clear step-by-step 3D instructions on screen — and you'll need 'em. Some of these babies require the patience of Job and the stamina of Lindbergh, as the dozens of complex folds grow tedious. A guarantee: You've never constructed a paper plane like any of these. A laser printer and standard paper work just fine.



The Greatest Paper Airplanes offers 50 models, ranging from easy-to-build darts and gliders to complicated SSTs and starships.

Highway 61 Interactive

Graphix Zone
(800) 828-3838

Of all the "interactive music" CD-ROMs on the market, this one's the best. In covering the life, songs, and times of Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Interactive* uses a multimedia collage of objects you can click on to take you to unexpected places. A photograph on a wall becomes a video excerpt, a door leads to the streets of New York, where you can take a virtual tour of Greenwich Village and the haunts of a young Dylan. This Windows CD-ROM is full of surprises — you never know where you might be going, but by immersing yourself in the journey, you'll better understand Dylan's powerful influence in the American music scene. (By the way, don't run this on anything less than a fast 486.)

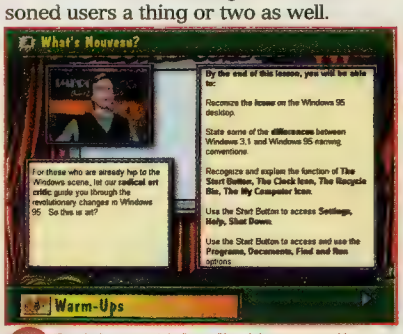


This collage is the jumping-off point for *Highway 61 Interactive*. Every item here is a journey into the life, times, and music of Dylan.

The Improv Presents Windows 95 for the Technically Challenged

Graphix Zone
(800) 828-3838

Even if you're a hacker who needs no introduction to a new operating system, you'll appreciate the innovative approach of this new CD-ROM. Graphix Zone uses the pros of The Improv comedy club to teach the OS we'll all be using in due time. There are plenty of video warm-ups and one-liners by members of the Improv troupe, and the humor is mostly first-rate. The tutorial consists of 17 lessons (each with subsections), all presented via interactive comedic sketches. For example, an Improv member instructs you to move your cursor to the toolbar and click on a particular icon. Running under either Windows 3.1 or 95, the program does a very clean job for total novices, and manages to teach seasoned users a thing or two as well.



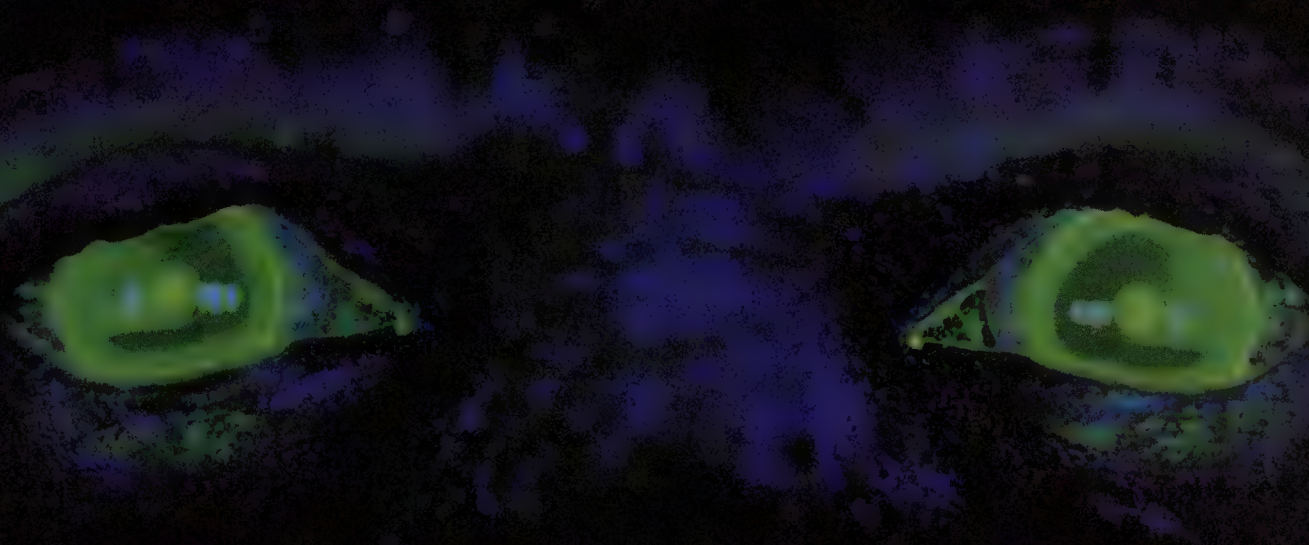
Each lesson kicks off with a comedic video clip. Underlying all the humor, however, is a fairly detailed tutorial.

Material World

StarPress
(800) 782-7944

This Windows CD-ROM is the result of a great idea, and it works like a charm. *Material World* pans the globe to look at families from different nations and cultures. You see how they live, what they

WARNING: The Host of This Game is *NOT* User Friendly.

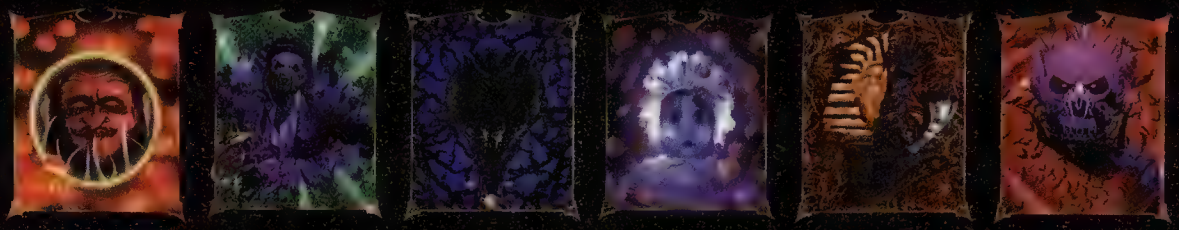


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Product Information Number 244

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in a go-kart.

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AGES 6+

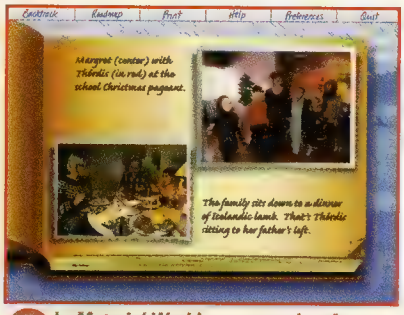
For IBM®-PC & Compatibles on CD-ROM. 1-800-879-PLAY. http://www.microprose.com

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Product Information Number 171

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

eat, how they work and play, and what they own. Information is provided via photo slideshows and video clips. Narrated by Charles Kuralt and assembled like a family album, *Material World* is endlessly fascinating. Survey results from a poll of each of the families from 30 nations represented here are surprising, and sometimes shocking. If finding out what's for dinner in Mongolia — or what you do with your time in Western Samoa — sounds interesting, you need to check this disc out.



In *Material World*, you can select from any of 30 families from around the globe — find out how they live, what they eat, and what they do for work and play.

Microsoft Complete Interactive Guide to Baseball — 1995 Edition

Microsoft
(800) 426-9400

There are some great baseball sims on the market, like *LaRussa 3* and *HardBall 5*, but if you're a fan of the real game, this Windows disc is a must have. Now in its second year and nicely improved over the '94 edition, *Complete Guide* establishes itself as the reigning champ of baseball references. Anything and everything you want to know about the sport — history, players, teams, records, or ballparks — is here, and then some. Packed with video (clips of Ruth, Gehrig, and other greats are here), audio (gems from broadcast archives), and photos, the *Guide* lets you relive great moments. Or you can lose yourself in fascinating historical detail. Serious fans can test their knowledge with the challenging Trivia quiz.

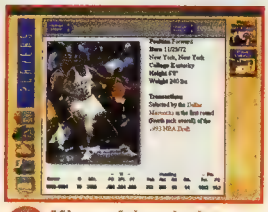


A new addition to the *Baseball* '95 edition is a ballparks section. For all 28 major-league parks, you get seating diagrams, best spots for food and parking, as well as tips on where to find the best souvenirs.

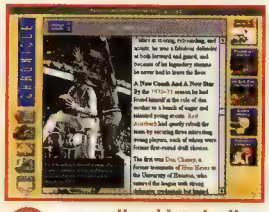
Microsoft Complete NBA Basketball Guide

Microsoft
(800) 426-9400

Using the same engine as Microsoft's baseball disc, this hoops CD-ROM for Windows delivers everything you could possibly want to know about the NBA. The '94-'95 edition, which includes season summaries, postseason play, league leaders, All-Star Game histories, and player profiles, is being replaced by the '96 edition (available in November). The new version builds on its predecessor by adding larger and smoother video clips, in-depth looks at league arenas, profiles of all active players (last year's version was selective), coverage of rookies (with college stats), and other new components. Like the baseball disc, this is the bible of its sport. And also like the baseball reference, you can lose yourself in it for hours.



Microsoft has the best NBA non-game around. It features current hoopsters...

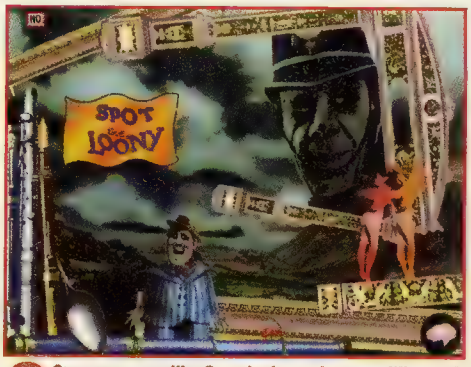


...as well as historically great teams and players.

Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time

7th Level
(214) 437-4858

Celebrating Monty Python's 25th anniversary, this rather unusual disc is almost a year old, but we're including it in case any of you fans missed it. Several of the original cast, including Terry Gilliam and writer Terry Jones, had a hand in developing this, so it's genuine Python. Which, of course, means lunacy, absurdity, silliness, games, and a giant hodgepodge of stuff to do. A lot of the content is based on original skits from the TV show. True-blue fans will recognize (nudge, nudge) the inspiration for many of these, uh, activities. There's little instruction on the CD, so just cut loose and click away.

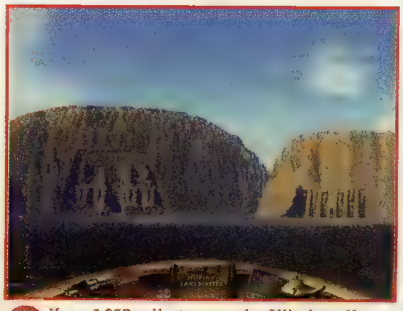


Strange games like Spot the Loony have a million and one distractions — things happen fast.

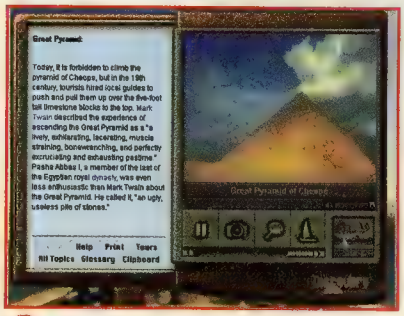
Nile: Passage to Egypt

The Discovery Channel Multimedia
(800) 762-2189

Developed by Human Code and the first real breakthrough CD-ROM for The Discovery Channel, *Nile: Passage to Egypt* puts you in a felucca (a common wooden sailing vessel on the Nile) along with a compass, map, and other tools. The 3D self-guided



Your 4,000-mile tour up the Nile is self-guided. The program uses beautiful rendered graphics...



...as well as video to provide a "you are there" quality to *Nile: Passage to Egypt*.

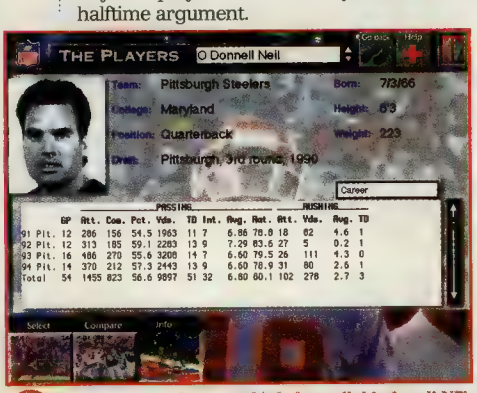
PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

tour takes you on a 4,000-mile journey from Lake Victoria to Alexandria on the Mediterranean. The first-person perspective provides a "you are there" realism as you view detailed renderings of cities, plains, cliffs, jungles, and remains of historic civilizations. There are several dozen stop-off points you can explore, plus a variety of games and puzzles, one of which teaches literacy in hieroglyphics. The pyramid site illustrating 12 steps to mummification will stay with you for a while. It's never a dull tour.

The Official 1995/1996 NFL Interactive Yearbook

RealTime Sports
(800) 554-4420

Like the NFL, this annual yearbook has "license" stamped all over it. It has the blessings of the NFL and NBC, as well as a section for ordering merchandise. While many of us are fed up with licenses and endorsements, brought to a head by the NFL vs. Jerry Jones circus, we'll put our cynicism aside to say that this disc has pure appeal for pro gridiron fans. There's nearly an hour of video clips, a detailed look at the '94 season, and plenty of historical data on record holders, top draft picks, hall of famers, and the like. You get current profiles on players from all squads, and a neat feature that lets you compare the stats of any two players — a nice way to settle a halftime argument.

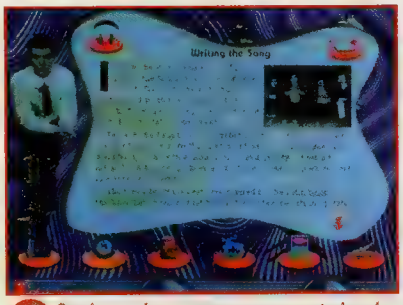


Career stats and personal info is available for all NFL players from the '94 season in *The Official Yearbook*.

Rhino Rock Expedition: the 60s

Compton's New Media
(800) 261-6109

"Inna-Gadda-Da-Vida, honey, don't you know that I love you?" If you just got warm and tingly, and the organ and fuzz-guitar riff filled your head (We're not being sarcastic — some of us bought the album after seeing Iron Butterfly live), you'll probably like this CD-ROM. It features The Vogues, Tommy James and the Shondells, The Searchers, The Turtles, The Monkees, Vanilla Fudge, Beau Brummels, The Young Rascals, Iron Butterfly, and Sonny and Cher. What you get: one hit song from each of these ten groups (playable on your audio CD), a brief live-performance video clip, an audio interview with a band member remembering some nugget about the song's composition, as well as trivia, a discography, a "where are they now?" section, and more. This isn't a must-have, but it's guaranteed to make you smile and tap your feet.



Stories on how songs were created and a "Where Are They Now?" section make for fun reading in *Rhino Rock*.

Rhino Soul Expedition: the 60s

Compton's New Media
(800) 261-6109

Like the rock version (above), you get the skinny on ten musical acts from the 1960s. The only difference between these products is the lineup of performers — interface and entry points are identical. This collection features Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Eddie Floyd, Sam and Dave, Clarence Carter, Carla Thomas, Archie Bell and the Drells, Rufus Thomas, Booker T. and the MG's, and The Capitols. Like its sister product, *Rhino Soul Expedition* is a disc you'll fully cover in less than a couple of hours, but hey ... the street price of $25 or less makes it a good deal for nostalgia trips.

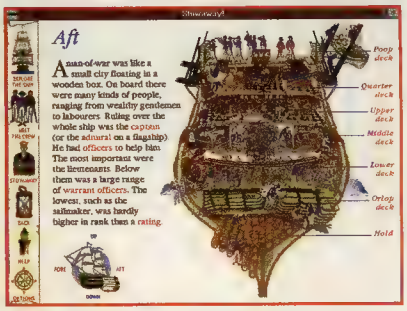


In *Rhino Soul*, Booker T. and the MG's let loose on "Green Onions."

Stephen Biesty's Incredible Cross-Sections: Stowaway!

DK Multimedia
(800) DKMM-575

Strange title, huh? Strange premise, too. In this disc, you explore the bowels of an 18th-century British warship. What you find is a pure revelation. These ships were floating miniature cities, many layers deep, with crew members performing tasks you never dreamed would be required on a sea vessel. The "cross section" name derives from slicing the ship vertically to see what's happening at each level — fore, aft, and mizzen. While history and military buffs will appreciate this CD-ROM, DK inserts a little game to keep others exploring. The "Stowaway!" in the title comes from a Where's Waldo? inspiration. As you investigate the ship, you'll find a young stowaway if your eyes are sharp. Find ten of them, and you win the mini-game. All in all, this product is much more appealing than its name.



Grab a magnifying glass, and see if you can spot the stowaway.

Take Your Best Shot

7th Level
(214) 437-4858

More mindless madness from 7th Level, *Take Your Best Shot* is a hilarious compilation of Bill Plimpton animations. They're in



Joe shows his boss a thing or two. Here, he ties his ears together and stretches them to make a slingshot. The boss recovers, of course.

THE GREAT ONE



SEGA™ GENESIS™



SUPER NINTENDO™

It's all here...

Hammer the puck, and burn the net... with the world's best!



Also available for the Atari Jaguar™

Battle for the puck with the game's full-screen digital face-offs, then compete just like "The Great One" with lightening quick blades, awesome slap shots and unstoppable one-timers. Play hard-hitting exhibition games, complete 84 games seasons, or a grueling best-of-seven playoff series. Tear up the ice with over 600 real NHLPA players on either 26 North American teams or six international All-Star teams. Trade your favorite NHLPA players and create your own dream team with Gretzky leading the way. Two gameplay modes... *Simulation* mode is serious hockey... with real pro rules and penalties. *Arcade* mode is faster, tougher "in-your-face" hockey game with relaxed officiating! It's different... it's fast-action hockey... it's board slammin' fun! *Check* your local retailer and score!

TIME WARNER INTERACTIVE

TRADEMARKS OF ... AND ... ARE TRADEMARKS OF ... AND ... LICENSED BY THE ... THE ... OF THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION.

Product Information Number 245

PC GAMER HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

the form of games, screen savers, wall paper, and Windows icons. Positioned as a stress reliever — especially for those in a corporate environment — this disc shows staid-looking gentlemen in conservative suits torturing and abusing each other in fantastic ways. The comedy is dark and surreal. Joe and his boss decapitate each other and insert lit fuses into their necks before putting heads back on. Of course, after the explosion, they're unfazed, as good businessmen should be. Sounds disgusting? It's not. We guarantee that you will laugh, and insist on having someone else see it to believe it. For under $20, this is a novelty well worth having.



In this takeoff of the old *Breakthrough* arcade game included in *Take Your Best Shot*, you shoot cannonballs at corporate heads. The goal, of course, is to blast them.

The Ultimate Einstein

Byron Preiss
(800) 910-0099

If you've played a lot of science fiction or space games, this new CD-ROM is guaranteed to a) let you test the theories of the designers, or b) help you understand why that black hole ate your ship and sent you



In the lab, you learn by concrete examples about Einstein's theories. Here, brothers Hendrick and Max perform an experiment. Max goes off into space and returns in good health, but it's a little late for Hendrick, who aged a bit faster.



A virtual Einstein pops up to offer opinions on any number of topics, including literature, pre-established harmony, understanding the world, human rights, and The Great Riddle.

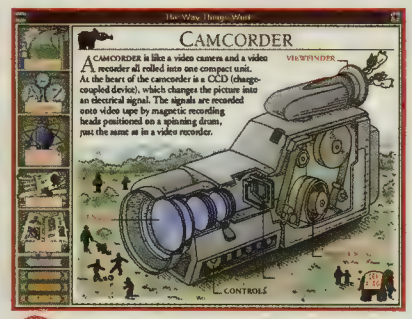
back to the C:\ prompt. This is a heady product that covers Einstein's life, his writings, and his opinions on everything from cultural decay and human rights to wealth and authority (presented by an Einstein lookalike).

If you're having trouble understanding Einstein's theories, you can go to the laboratory for some real-world simulations of quantum mechanics, the speed of light, black holes, and, of course, relativity. If you're really hooked, you can read the complete text of Ronald W. Clark's biography *Einstein: The Life and Times*, included on the disc.

The Way Things Work

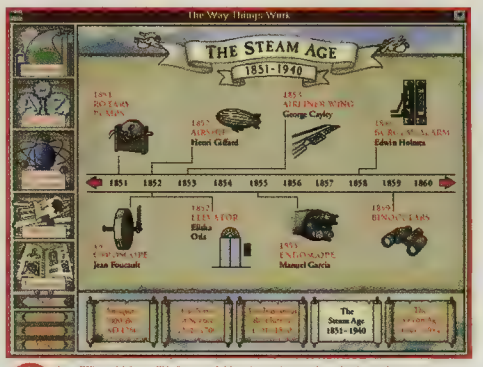
DK Multimedia
(800) DKMM-575

If you've seen the best-selling book, you have an idea of what you get: a lively, humor-filled treatment covering the A to Z of how ... well ... *everything* works. The disc is even more fun than the book, thanks to animated screens that illustrate the workings of various items ranging from camcorders and helicopters to personal computers and windshield wipers. The cartoony illustrations and a friendly narrator, coupled with intelligent, clever, and clear explanations make *The Way Things Work* appealing to any age.



To show how things work, various components move and interact for a clear and clever explanation. If you study this program hard enough, your friends will be telling you to shut up next time their VCR locks up or their air conditioner goes on the fritz.

There's a huge amount of information here, and it's all cross-referenced. Additional sections include The Principles of Science (things like floating, photography, and telecommunications) and Inventors (nearly 100 are covered). This Windows CD-ROM might be a reference and educational tool — but it's also a lot of fun to explore.



In *The Way Things Work*, Historical timelines show when inventions took place. Click on any of the mini-illustrations to see how they work.

Word War 5

Milennium Media Group
(800) 892-6848

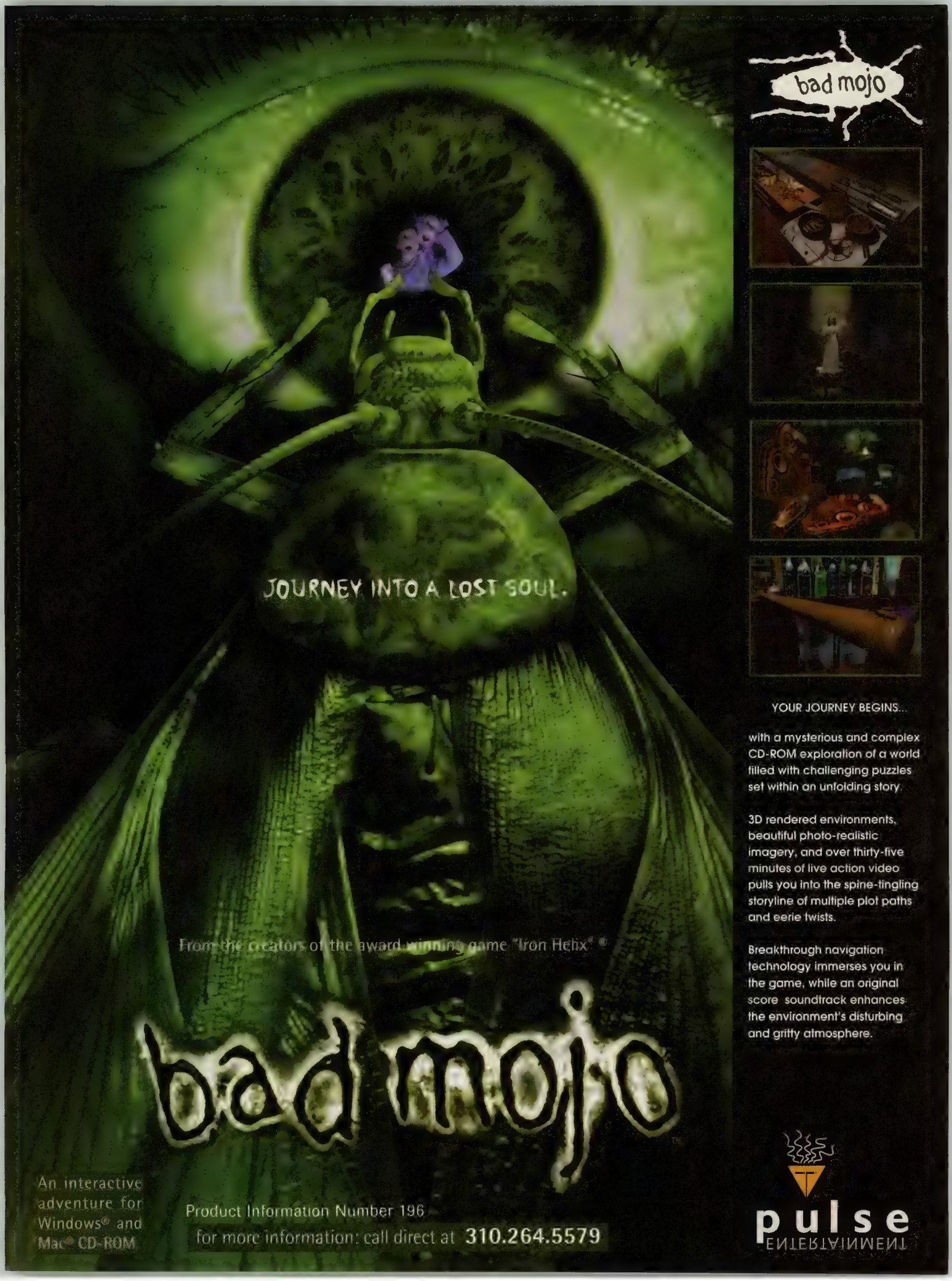
Pure and simple, this is a brainteaser for word lovers — especially five-letter word lovers. In fact, if you're partial to the number "5" for any reason, you're in for a treat. There are five games, each based on five-letter words, with five difficulty levels, and you can play in any of five languages. Nothing is easy here. In a matter of minutes, I discovered that, yes, "almud" and "tragi" are real words.



We've just demonstrated our editorial skills by building the word "bland" out of the five groupings. In this game, titled "Word Targets," you start with five blanks, and click on the ever-changing letter groups (below the word "bland") to create new words.

(Thanks to an on-screen Merriam-Webster dictionary icon, you can get definitions.) The soundtrack and sparsely stylized graphics create a distinctively different game environment. Very European. Very addictive.

PCG

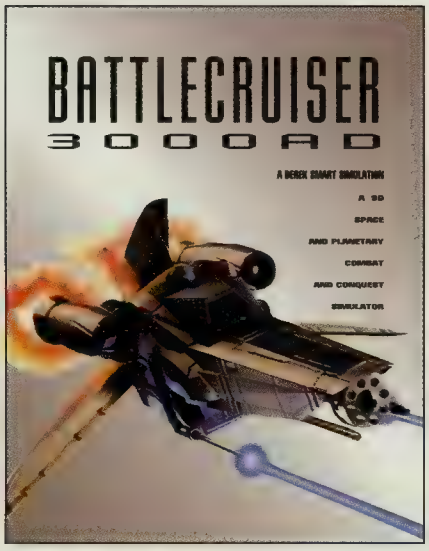

bad mojo
JOURNEY INTO A LOST SOUL.
From the creators of the award winning game "Iron Helix" ®
bad mojo
An interactive adventure for Windows® and Mac® CD-ROM
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for more information: call direct at 310.264.5579
YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS...
with a mysterious and complex CD-ROM exploration of a world filled with challenging puzzles set within an unfolding story.
3D rendered environments, beautiful photo-realistic imagery, and over thirty-five minutes of live action video pulls you into the spine-tingling storyline of multiple plot paths and eerie twists.
Breakthrough navigation technology immerses you in the game, while an original score soundtrack enhances the environment's disturbing and gritty atmosphere.
pulse
ENTERTAINMENT

JUST A MINUTE...I PROMISE!!!

...ENGAGE TRACTOR BEAM ON ROCKET LAUNCHERS...✓

...LAUNCH PROBE TO INVESTIGATE TERRAIN...✓

...PREPARE **BATTLECRUISER** FOR COMBAT...



Revolutionary neural-net based AI system.

Stunning SVGA space and ground based combat.

Immense 3D galaxy with 12 AI-controlled alien species and 225 unique planets.

Strategically manage and control your Battlecruiser and its resources including interceptors, ATV's, and marines.

Derek Smart's BATTLECRUISER 3000AD. THE LAST THING YOU'LL EVER DESIRE.



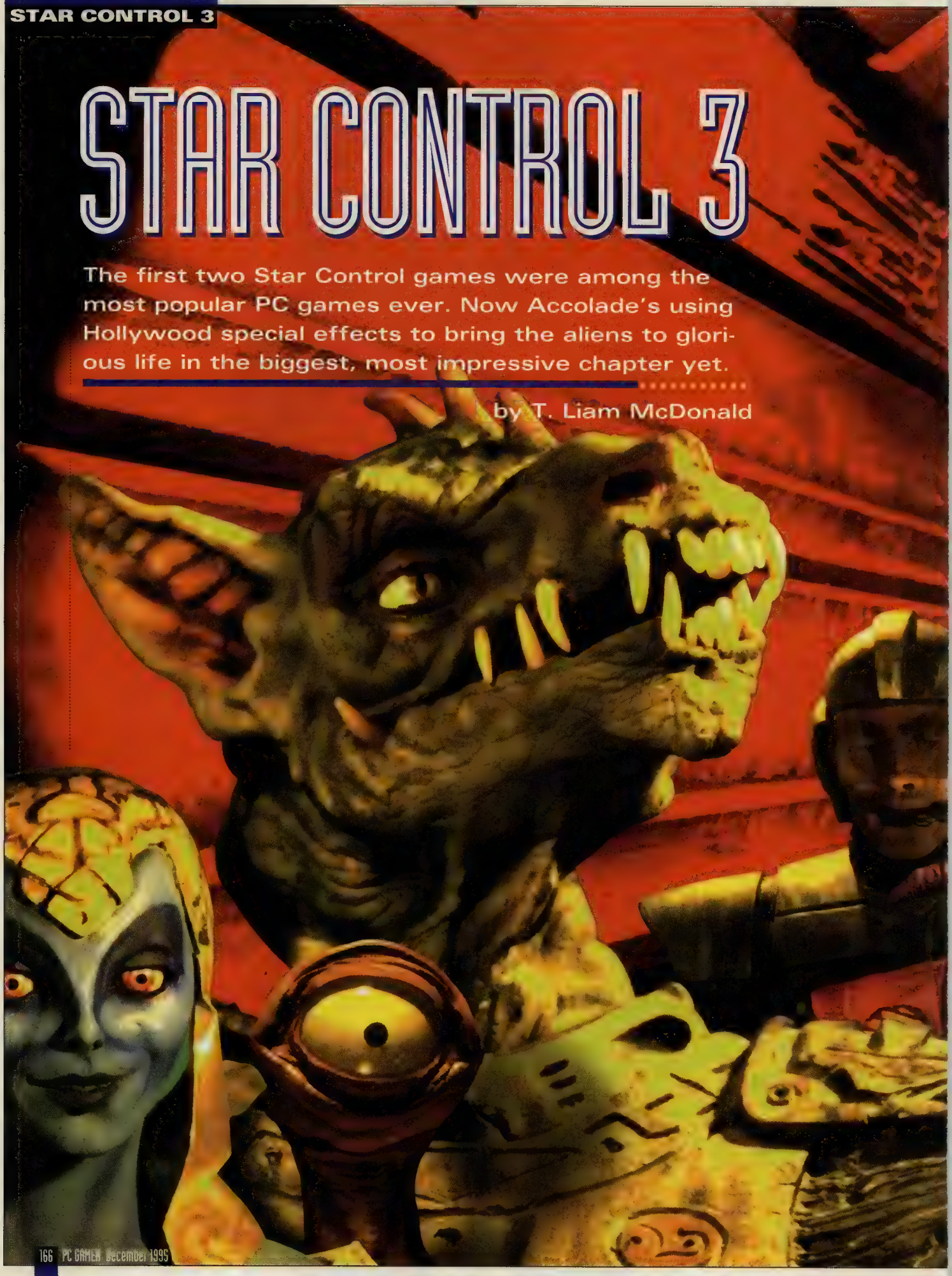
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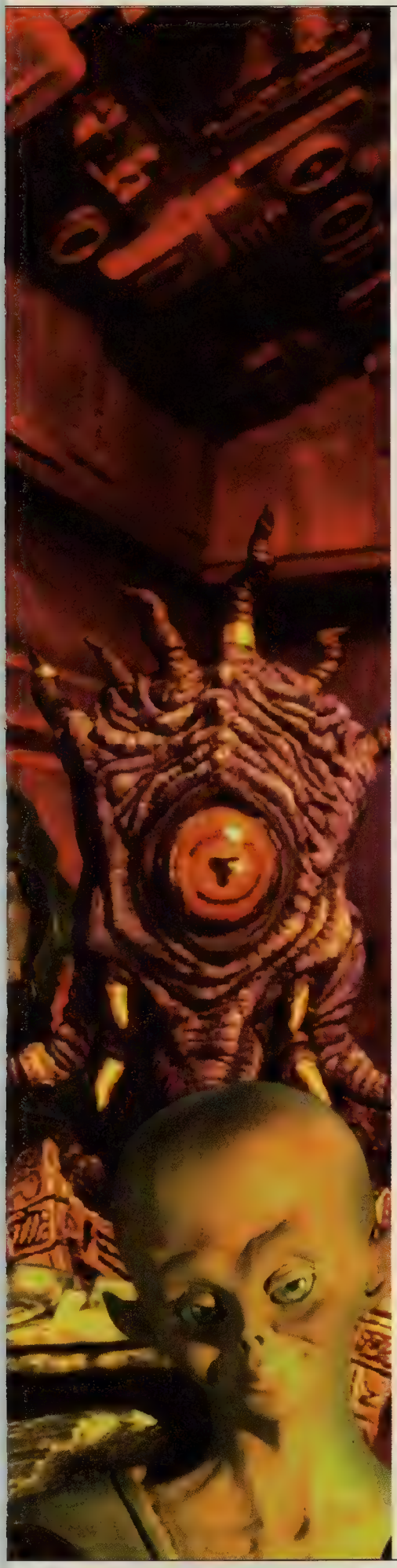
Product Information Number 239

STAR CONTROL 3

The first two Star Control games were among the most popular PC games ever. Now Accolade's using Hollywood special effects to bring the aliens to glorious life in the biggest, most impressive chapter yet.

by T. Liam McDonald





Before there was *Master of Orion*, or *Ascendancy*, or *Pax Imperia II*, or any of the other conquer-the-galaxy games, there was *Star Control*. Its long shadow falls on any who try to make a spacefaring strategy game, and so far, no one has done better. Six years after Paul Reiche III and Fred Ford first introduced *Star Control*, and four years after the sequel, it still hits the charts as an "all-time favorite" and "most played" game on online services and in gamer surveys.

Why? Maybe because it blends several disparate elements into a unified, engrossing whole. Arcade-style space combat, strategic conquest, and detailed interactions with alien races are all woven together to create a game unlike any other. Some players are definitely attracted to the weird characters encountered while ranging across the galaxy, while others appreciate the strategic depth of play or the subtle humor. Another class of player never even touches the main game, but instead only plays the arcade-level "melee combat" section.

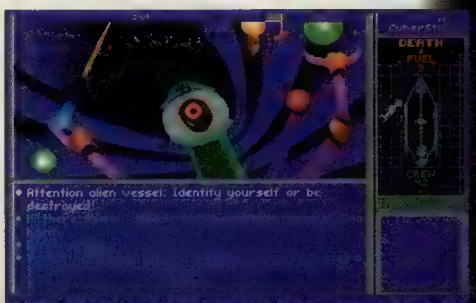
Whatever the reason, it is still remembered fondly and still played. At Accolade, the publisher of the Star Control games, it is the game for which people most consistently demand a sequel. When I visited Legend Software, the design group currently developing *Star Control 3* for Accolade, Producer George MacDonald showed me a binder several inches thick and filled to capacity with letters, faxes, and E-mail asking for a new Star Control and offering suggestions for improving on the earlier games.

"We read them all," MacDonald says, "and a lot of their suggestions were incorporated into the plans."

MacDonald heads up a development team consisting of freelance designers Michael Lindner and Daniel Greenberg, both working with Virginia-based publisher Legend. Legend, the folks responsible for *DeathGate*, the *Spellcasting* games, and a number of other adventure titles, became involved with the project when their president, Bob Bates, told Accolade chief Al Miller what a fan he was of the Star Control series. At the time, Accolade was looking for an out-of-house team to handle the complex project, and Legend wound up with the gig. Lindner, who had designed Legend's *Companions of Xanth*, and Greenberg, whose previous credits included White Wolf's *Vampire* series, SSI's *Genie's Curse*, and early work on *MechWarrior 2*, were eager to pick up the story where Reiche and Ford had left off.

Both men are self-described "Star Control-heads," so the prospect of continuing the series was one they couldn't pass up. As Greenberg points out, "It's such a beloved game with so many people. You mention *Star Control*, and people's eyes light up. I always thought it had some of the best science fiction storytelling in any computer game. It has a history that goes back thousands of years, covering dozens of races. It has a marvelous internal consistency, but there's always this sense of wonder: that the universe is a bizarre place full of wonderful things to discover."

Greenberg and Lindner are going to take that story to the next step, giving players a chance to discover even more of this endlessly fascinating universe with some of the most complex story-strategy play ever seen in this type of game.



Star Control II used traditional, flat computer animation to depict the alien races, like this Spathi...



...but the bug-eyed monsters in the new game are all animatronic puppets, videotaped for a realistic look.

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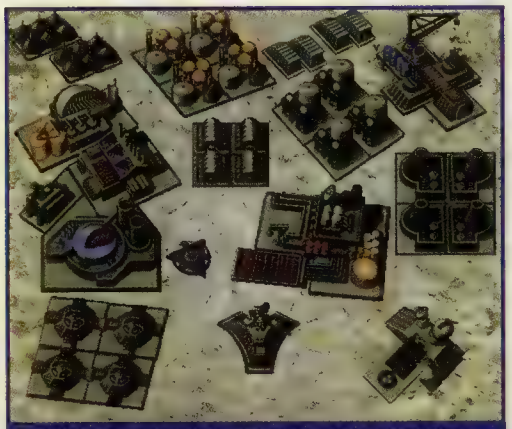
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In addition to exploration, diplomacy, and combat, *Star Control 3* challenges gamers to build space colonies.

The Story So Far...

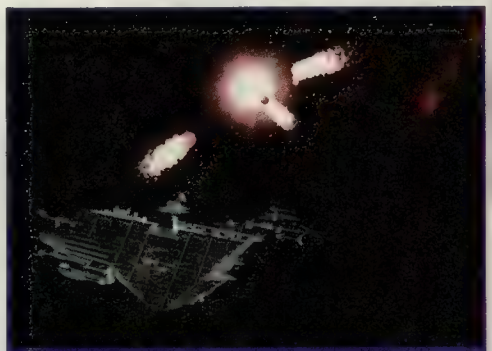
In *Star Control II*, you were a human at the head of the Sentient Milieu, a group of races allied for a single purpose: thwarting the Hierarchy of Battle Thralls. Led by the Ur-Quan, the Hierarchy sought to enslave the universe. Through forging alliances, exploring planets, and heavy combat, the Hierarchy was defeated with the destruction of their massive flagship. As *Star Control 3* begins, the player is presented with a new, more dangerous threat to the universe.

All across the galaxy, something strange is happening. A phenomenon known as "interdimensional fatigue" is causing space itself to unravel. The galaxy is disappearing, taking entire solar systems with it. It is believed that the long-vanished Precursors, a race of ancient, mysterious beings, possessed the knowledge to halt this destruction. The Precursors left their mystical wisdom and technological knowledge encoded in artifacts, and these artifacts are believed to be in an uncharted region of space called the Kessarri Quadrant.

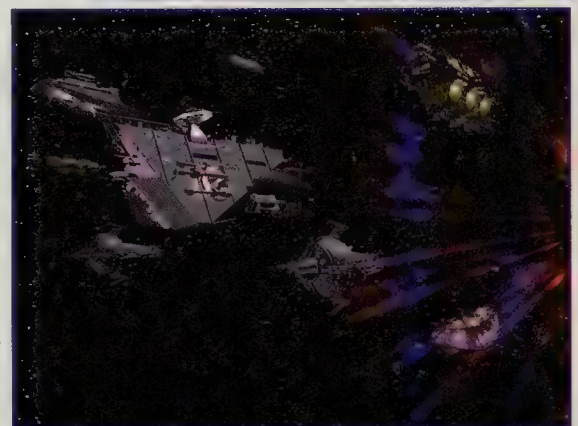
As the game begins, you gather the races who just fought each other for domination of the galaxy. Friend and enemy form a new League of Sentient Races, which is dedicated to the same principles as the Sentient Milieu. These principles are based on strong moral rights and wrongs, barring such actions as slavery and the unnecessary use of military force. Encouraging free trade with sentient beings, respecting their rights, and treating them with a fair and even hand are the guiding principles of the League. They are important principles to remember during play, because as the leader of the League, you must constantly play a tricky balancing game between actions that will lead to victory and actions that violate these basic principles.

Once you're in the Kessarri Quadrant, the goal is to gain a foothold from which to explore the planets for Precursor artifacts. There are new races in this region, and though they do not immediately join the League, the way you treat them will effect their decision to join in the future. During this process of colonization and exploration, you run into the races belonging to the Hegemonic Crux. An alliance of races from another Quadrant, the Crux, wants a piece of the Kessarri Quadrant. The conflict escalates, and you build your strength for the inevitable war, trying to lure Crux races to your side while keeping as many races in the League as possible.

Star Control 3 divides into three fairly distinct sections, with countless story lines woven throughout. The first part is colonization, followed by all-out war with the Crux, and concluding with victory (hopefully) and several surprise



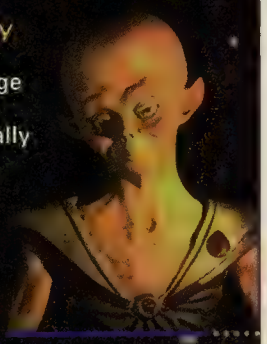
A K'tang vessel stands by as a star system collapses from the "interdimensional fatigue" plaguing the galaxy.



In another cinematic sequence, a fleet from the Hegemonic Crux jumps into the Kessarri Quadrant.

Alien Nations: The Star Control Races

Since *Star Control 3* begins where *Star Control II* ends, The Hierarchy of Battle Thralls is defeated and many of your former enemies are now your allies in The League of Sentient Races (the new name for the Sentient Milieu). Opposing you is a new consortium of enemies from another sector known as the Crux. Since allegiances shift so much throughout the game, we won't bother to divide up enemies and friends. At the beginning, however, the Crux consists of the Clairconctlar, Daktaklakpak, Doog, the Harikka/Yorn, Ploxis, and the K'tang.



Arilou Lalee'lay
Small, humanoid creatures with large heads. One of the most technologically advanced races.

The Arilou Skiff: A weak but fast and maneuverable ship, with an auto-targeting short-range laser. Can teleport away from danger or into a solid attack position.

Chmmr
A hybrid of Chenjesu and Mmrnmhrm, the Chmmr is a powerful hybrid of living crystal and machine. They possess the technologies of both races, and are able to destroy slave-shields. Because they have been de-evolved by the Crux, they need to be re-evolved during the game.

The Avatar: Believed to be the most powerful ship in space. Its laser is twice as powerful as the VUX laser, the nearest to it in power. It is also orbited by three satellites that fire their own laser weapons at incoming ships or

Continued on page 170

Continued from page 169

all but the largest ships closer to The Avatar.



Clairconctlar
These are a race of noble, slow-talking warriors made of silicon. They are part of the Crux as a debt of honor, and can be lured away in the course of the game.

Clairconctlar Cruiser: The Clairconctlar battlecruiser is bristling with guns on all sides, and can hit a ship from any direction.

Daktaklakpak
The first Crux you meet are these cybernetic actuarials. Actually created as scrub bots by an ancient race, these data-obsessed robots will remain consistently obnoxious throughout the game.

Vivisector: This ship grabs you uses its nasty syringe-like appendages to do damage.

Doog
These slow-witted dog-lizards are in indentured servitude and do all the ship building for the Crux empire. They're pathetic, but you can help them out of their plight.



Constructor: Looks like a big warehouse, and is a very durable ship that regenerates from damage.

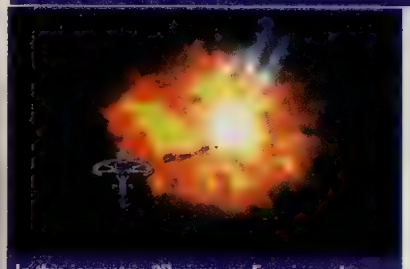


Exquivan
These philosophical, monk-like creatures are attempt to achieve a zen-like state of nothingness, and so they avoid conflict.

Continued on page 173



In a melee sequence, an Exquivan and a Harika ship exchange differing views.



In this isometric 3D view, an Exquivan ship finishes off an enemy vessel.

twists as the Precursors and still another ancient race are revealed.

"We wanted to keep the Star Control experience," MacDonald says. "We loved melee and we wanted melee that was tremendously easy to get into but preserved the basic simple control and the deep action experience. We liked exploring: we wanted a big universe to explore, but we wanted to make it easier to actually get places. We wanted a deep story full of stuff to find and figure out. And we wanted to bring the visuals and multimedia elements as far forward as we could."

"It's more than just strip-mining the cosmos," Greenberg adds. "In *Master of Orion*, the whole universe is a resource for your manipulation. In *Star Control*, the universe is a bunch of quirky, interesting, bizarre people and aliens for you to relate to, as well as a resource for your manipulation."

"*Master of Orion* is at its core a wargame," MacDonald continues. "You're going to do some exploration, but there are certain bounds as to what you can find. Star Control is at its core a giant *story*, and you have to find this story and explore it and explore the relationship between the different aliens and their agendas. There is a terrific back-story going on behind the action. There are tremendous forces at work in the universe, and you're right in the middle of that."

Melee

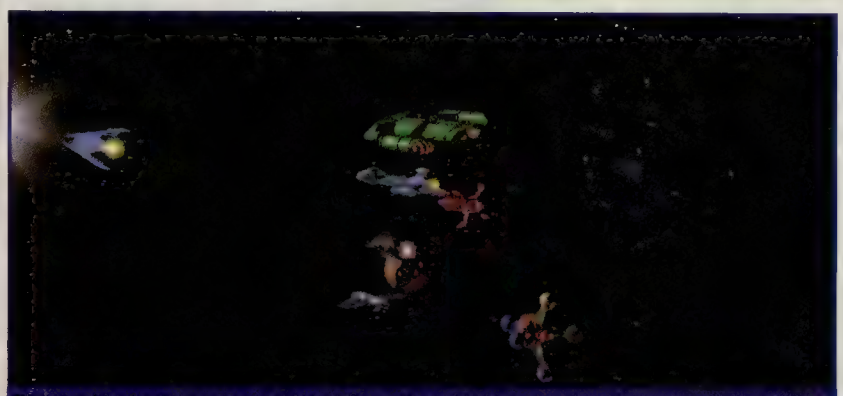
Of the three main elements of gameplay — exploration and conquest, negotiating with aliens, and melee combat — melee is many players' favorite. As Michael Lindner observes, "There are a whole group of people who never play the adventure game but just love that melee experience, and a whole group of other people that just weren't into the fighting."

Melee combat involves a meeting engagement of two ships, which swirl around a screen and blast away at each other. Each of the 25 ship types has its own unique look, characteristics, "special functions," weapons, strengths and weaknesses. While the familiar top-down arcade perspective has been preserved in *Star Control 3*, new modes of play have been added with some help from outside developers Panoptic.

While the "2D" top-down view will be the most familiar to *Star Control* gamers, two new perspectives have also been added. A slick, 3D mode shows the



Graphically, the series has come a long way from the days of *Star Control II*, shown here.



The game's animated sequences combine 3D graphics with stirring music and narration to move the plot along. Here, a delegation from the League of Sentient Races sets off for the Kessarri Quadrant.

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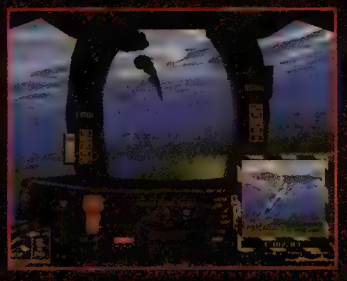
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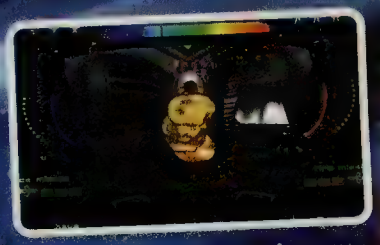
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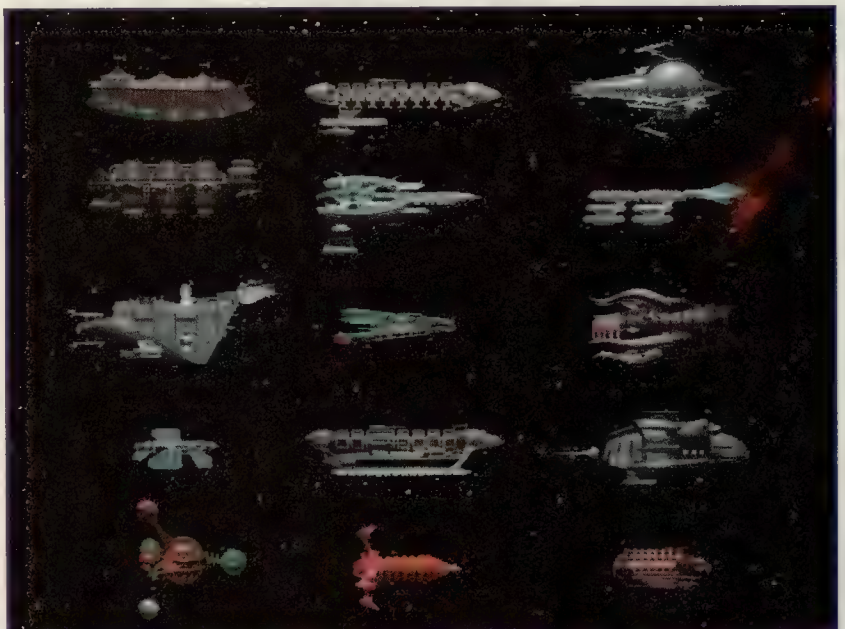
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Many of *Star Control 3*'s ships will be familiar to veterans, but they've all been redone for the new game.

perspective from directly behind the ship, as though you're looking over the "shoulders" of the ship you're controlling, with the enemy in the distance. Of course, there are some significant issues in seeing the action in 3D. Ships with guns that can aim off the ship's line of travel, such as the Orz cannon, create their own problems. Since so many ships have rotating guns which can fire in any direction, a third viewing perspective was necessary, so a *Falcon*-style "padlock" view was added. This view always keeps your ship on a vertical line with the enemy, never letting him out of sight even when he's behind you and you're traveling in the other direction.



A special effects technician prepares a Harika for his moment in the spotlight.

With melee mode being so popular, *Star Control 3* will allow you to play it independently of the main game, as its predecessors did. One element which is expanded upon in this version is head-to-head play. Side-by-side play has not only been retained, but network, modem, and direct-connect options have been added. And though no one would elaborate on the fact, it's pretty clear that Accolade is working on making melee play available on one of the major online services.

Gamers who simply don't want the arcade experience don't have to play melee at all; they can concentrate on character interaction and strategy.

"Cyborg autopilot is good enough," Lindner says, "that you can make strategic decisions and the AI will fight out the battle in a way that seems fair. So, even people that are all thumbs can play the game fine."



A Harika and a Yorn (the little fuzzball) negotiate with you.

Exploring the Universe

While melee is certainly a large part of any *Star Control* game, exploration and dealing with alien races is what makes it special. How these are handled has changed with new technologies, as well as player feedback. Exploring and colonizing new planets has become more streamlined and efficient. The team spent time on this

Continued from page 170

Exquivan Cruiser: This cross-bow-shaped ship pushes enemies away and throws out blockers to get away from conflict, reflecting the Exquivan philosophy.

Humans
An adaptable and warlike people, humans seize superior alien technology and quickly adapt it for their own uses.



Cruiser: Armed primarily with homing nuclear warheads and short-range lasers, human Cruisers are best for long-range hit-and-run attacks.

Colony Ship: A new "carrier" and colony-building ship.



Mycon
While these fungoid critters have no real mechanical technology to their credit, they are light-years ahead in biotechnology, and can create genetic modifications by thought alone.

Mycon Podship: Though slow, the Podship fires a tracking ball of coalesced energy known as a "plasmoid." These are dangerous weapons, but slow and short-lived.

Orz
Fish-like creatures that, most likely, are from another dimension. No one is able to translate their language, so little is known about them, except that the Arilou don't trust them.



Nemesis: Equipped with a rotating cannon that can fire in

Continued on page 174

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any direction. More lethal is the company of jet-pack-equipped Space Marines it can deploy.



Pkunk
A mystical, non-violent people prone to cryptic ramblings of various degrees of import.

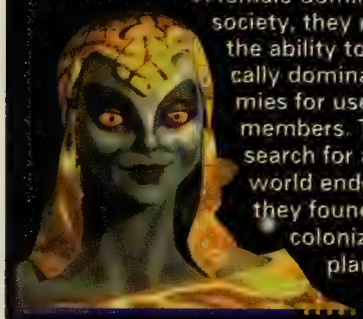
The Fury: A small, psi-controlled ship that fires streams of hot metal forward and to the sides for broadside attacks.

Spathi
The small, soft, one-eyed Spathi are known mostly for their cowardice and fear.



Eluder: Since the Spathi spend most of their time avoiding conflict, it's no surprise that their ship serves a primarily defensive role, with weak forward-firing missiles, but a powerful rear-firing torpedo.

Syreen



A female-dominated society, they rely on the ability to psionically dominate enemies for use as crew members. Their search for a homeworld ended when they found and colonized a planet called Gaia.

Penetrator: Using their "syreen song," the Penetrator gets close to a ship and forces enemy crew to leave their vessel and come over to the Syreen, leaving the Penetrator more powerful. Once weakened this way, it destroys a ship with small missiles.

Continued on page 176



Pre-production sketches and storyboards helped Legend design the look and feel of *Star Control 3*.



An artist helps a VUX earn its name (which stands for Very Ugly Xenoform).

because, as Greenberg points out, "One of the biggest things that people didn't like was the tedious quality of flying from planet to planet, putting down your lander, flying over the planet and picking up everything. *I* always hated that part, and I was glad to see it was a pretty universally despised part of the game."

To make this a more user-friendly part of the game, players will no longer have to fiddle with controls to get into orbit around a planet: a unnecessarily frustrating part of *Star Control II*. Once in orbit, the former process of sending a lander down and scouring the surface is gone. A star map interface creates a greatly simplified exploration map, while an expanded colony building feature adds a new element to play. Once created, colonies can be expanded using a top-town *SimCity*-like interface. Though rudimentary (you can't place buildings on the map), it does allow you to select which structures to build for your colony.

Of course, all of this is serving the story, which is the one constant that *Star Control* fans want. "People were almost universal about wanting to preserve the races and their histories," Lindner points out, "and get answers to all the questions that were left dangling. *Star Control II* left a lot of questions unanswered, and this is a big universe. In *Star Control II*, you spent so much time flying around in that landing craft and so much time fighting, that the storytelling was only about 10% of your total gameplay. We really tried to balance that in this game and make each element about equal: 30% melee, 30% storytelling, and the rest strategy. There's a tight coupling between melee components, ship building, and alien dialogue. The strategy game revolves around building ships. Ships are needed to do melee. Dialog is related to what ships you can get and what improvements you can make in them."

Storytelling is done via dialog with alien creatures that you meet while traveling in space, before battle, or in orbit around a friendly planet. There are choices to be made in these encounters that will decided the directions of the game. Some races ask for special favors, such as all the best worlds, and by favoring one race you alienate another. The guiding principles of the League should also always affect dealings with other races, so there's a delicate tightrope to walk between taking actions you feel necessary to victory and doing the right thing ethically. "The plot largely resolves around the alliances you are able to make," says Lindner. "At every point where you could potentially recruit some ally, there's also a chance to not recruit them, and that makes recruitment of *another* race possible."

The creation of the races themselves is one of the most interesting aspects of *Star Control 3*. The process began with Greenberg and Lindner bringing over



"I'm ready for my closeup, Mr. DeMille." It's a lot of work to make these beasts beautiful.

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Utwig



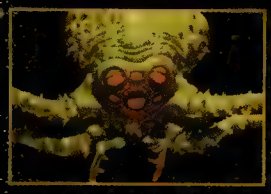
A sophisticated culture based on ancient and elaborate rituals, the Utwig possess several Precursor artifacts.

Jugger: Powerful shielding helps the Jugger make up for its slow, bulky structure, and its guns have a wide enough spread to hit most targets without really trying.

Ur-Quan Kohr-Ah

Though much like the Ur-Quan Kzer-Za, the Kohr-Ah have serious doctrinal differences with the Kzer-Za, believing that all non-Ur-Quan races should be destroyed. The Kohr-Ah are black and the Kzer-Za green.

Marauder: a mean-looking black ship, the Marauder shoots deadly little spinning disks.



Ur-Quan Kzer-Za

Imperialistic and highly advanced, these glandular caterpillars were defeated in their attempt to enslave the known universe (if you won *Star Control II*, that is).

Dreadnought: Its heavy armor and long range fusion bolts would be enough to make the Dreadnought a formidable opponent, but its ability to launch small fighter ships makes it almost unstoppable.

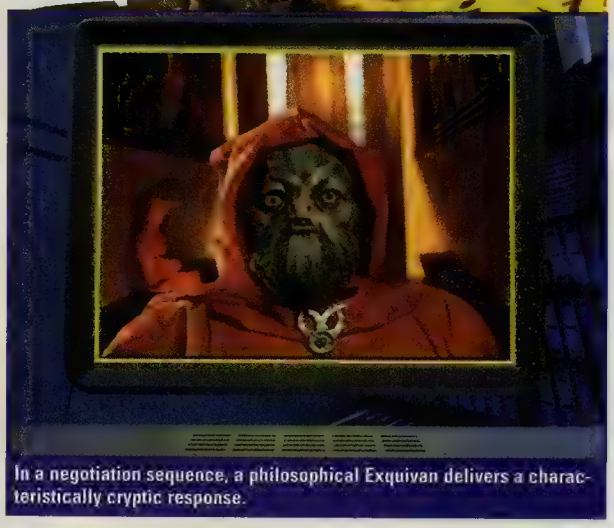
VUX



It stands for "Very Ugly Xenoforms, which describes these one-eyed squids. Oddly enough, they are extremely vain and won't suffer insults about their appearance.

Intruder: This ship fires odd little cocoons that crack open and spray live creatures, which attach to ships, slowing them down to its own speed. A powerful laser does the rest.

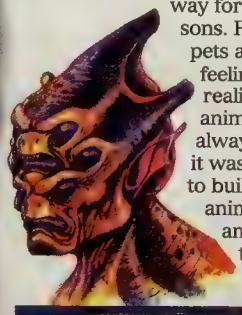




In a negotiation sequence, a philosophical Exquivan delivers a characteristically cryptic response.

some of the races from the earlier games, and then creating a whole new batch of races. Lindner then spent two weeks in California with the special effects artists at SOTAFX (State of the Art Effects), as he described the creatures the team had thought up and artists sketched them. Once the looks of the creatures were fixed, SOTA created fully automated animatronic puppets for each race. The races were built with a wide range of gyro-active facial expressions, much like any movie special effect.

Once done, these latex creations were put in front of a blue screen and filmed being put through their range of facial movements. Miniature sets were built and filmed, and the puppets were composited with these sets to create the alien dialogue scenes. Legend did it this way for a number of reasons. First off, the puppets and sets add a feeling of depth and reality of motion that animation doesn't always afford. Second, it was actually cheaper to built a couple dozen animatronic puppets and miniature sets than rendering them. The whole process only took a few months, and the result is a library of digitized alien creature footage that will be cut into small pieces and rendered "on the fly" to match the words being spoken by the alien. Some terrific voice acting is being recorded to give each of the creatures a distinct voice, and the ultimate result will lend interactions a unique feel.



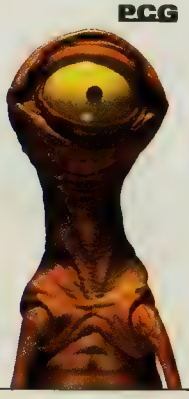
This combination of new technologies with and old and respected game series is sure to attract both a whole new audience, along with die-hard Star Control fans. The story, with its epic feel and Lovecraftian echoes of forgotten races, is the most elaborate seen in any science-fiction title. So many things enter into gameplay — combat, strategy, moral and ethical questions, tough decisions and delicate diplomatic relations — that *Star Control 3* should be one of the more exciting releases of 1996.

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PCG



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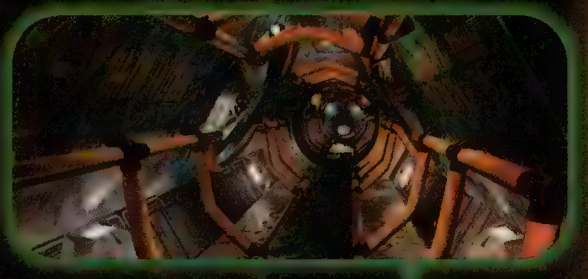


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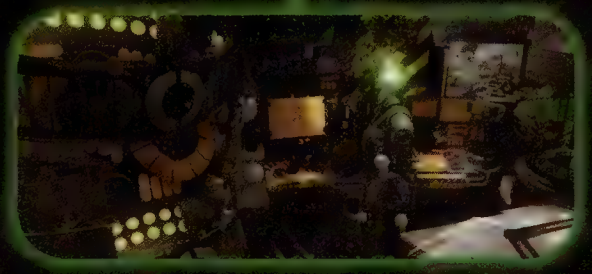

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THE TREASURES OF SIERRA

After several years of mixed success, a software giant makes a new commitment to its customers — and to itself.

by Steve Poole

During the 1980s and the very early part of the 1990s, the word "Sierra" meant only one thing to computer gamers: adventures. In these early days of PC gaming, adventure cycles like the King's Quest, Leisure Suit Larry, and Space Quest series set the standard for other companies to follow, with cutting-edge graphics and an always-satisfying blend of brain-teasing puzzles and rib-tickling stories.

But Sierra apparently wasn't satisfied being pigeonholed as an adventure-game company, and in 1991 started taking steps to broaden its scope. First, it acquired Oregon-based Dynamix, best known for its simulations, which were getting the attention of the media and gamers.

It wasn't too long after the Dynamix acquisition that Sierra started The Sierra Network, an online service focusing on multi-player games and social interaction. The Sierra Network was unlike any other online service: Users could create their own graphical personae, and the interface was structured as a little community, with a Town Hall, a Post Office, and other easily recognizable icons for users to click on to access mail, chat, bulletin boards, games, and so forth.



King's Quest VII is the most recent of the KQ adventure game series. Although Sierra has enjoyed much success with such games, they're reaching out in new directions.

The Sierra Network was indeed fun, but growth was slow — very slow. It soon became clear that the service was a substantial drain on Sierra's resources. A flurry of budget products arrived to generate some positive cash flow: a casino pack with a Leisure Suit Larry motif, a set of board games peopled with characters from King's Quest, etc. By the time Sierra sold the majority of stock in The Sierra Network (then known as The ImagiNation Network, or INN) to AT&T, it was clear that the foray into online gaming had cost Sierra a tidy sum.

Still, Sierra continued to produce high-quality games — *King's Quest VI*, for instance, was generally considered one of the best of the series, and *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* was roundly acclaimed as an impressive first game in a new series — and the Dynamix division cranked out a series of award-winning simulations: *Aces of the Pacific*, *Aces Over Europe*, *Front Page Sports Football*, *The Incredible Machine*, and more. Once again, Sierra decided to broaden its horizons, and in 1994 work began on a strategy game of immense scope. It was a space-colonization simulation called *Outpost*, and Sierra had high expectations for its new game.

ON-LINE

If you've been involved in PC gaming for more than a few months, you already know the *Outpost* story. Even though the game was fun, challenging, and looked great, PC gamers were expecting all sorts of features that preview stories had promised — and, quite frankly, they just weren't included in the version that Sierra shipped to retailers. The game sold very well, and there were surprisingly few returns, but so many of the promised features were missing that it seemed likely Sierra had rushed an unfinished game to market, and the manual was so brief that some gamers felt it had been left intentionally sparse to force *Outpost* owners to buy the hint book.



Though still early in development, *Red Baron II* looks to be the only World War One dogfighting game that can seriously challenge the reigning champion of the genre — *Red Baron.*

The lessons learned from *Outpost* were hard ones, but Sierra took them to heart — and now the company stands poised with its most diverse and exciting lineup ever. Sierra expects to publish more games in the coming year than we've seen from them in the past two or three combined, and what makes this even more astounding is that Sierra has fully committed itself to creating games that truly do push the envelope in terms of graphics, gameplay, and user-friendliness. When a company as big as Sierra plans to move full-steam-ahead into the next generation of gaming full-bore, we get excited. So we decided to talk with the people who know best what changes are in store — the game producers themselves — to find out what we'll be seeing from Sierra this year and next. With follow-ups to *Red Baron, EarthSiege, A-10 Tank Killer,* and *Outpost* in the works, there's no better time than the present to keep an eye on these folks.

The Second Time Around

Kate Kloos, executive producer on *Outpost II,* knows that *Outpost* had problems — and she's bound and determined that not only will *Outpost II* be free of those problems, but that it will also surpass the original in nearly every other regard. *Outpost II* will be easier to manage and more fun to play, and it'll

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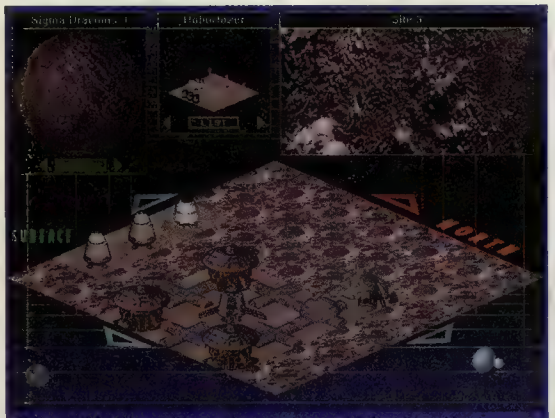
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Outpost didn't live up to most gamers' expectations, but Sierra accepted the criticism and put much time and effort into *Outpost II*

be more scientifically accurate, too.

To ensure that *Outpost II* is as close as you can get to a *true* space-colonization simulation, Sierra has hired some highly respected folks to work on the technical aspects of the game. The designer is Gentry Lee, an engineer and novelist with some impressive works to his credit, both scientific and creative. Among other things, Lee worked as chief engineer of Project Galileo at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, from 1977 to 1988; he coordinated the technical aspects of the spacecraft that recently made mankind's first close encounter with an asteroid and which will arrive at Jupiter this month. Lee was also director of science analysis and mission planning on the Viking probe that touched down on Mars in the 1970s.

Lee's creative works are equally commanding. He and Carl Sagan were partners in creating the PBS miniseries "Cosmos," winner of three Emmys and a Peabody award for excellence in television programming. From 1988 to 1993, he collaborated with science fiction giant Arthur C. Clarke to create the novels *Cradle, Rama II, The Garden of Rama,* and *Rama Revealed,* all national best-sellers that have been translated into 18 foreign languages. Lee's first solo novel, *Bright Messengers,* was published in June.

In addition to Lee, Sierra brought two other scientists on board for *Outpost II*: James R. French and Dr. David C. Black. French has taken on the role of "Chief Engineer," while Black has assumed the mantle of "Chief Scientist," making *Outpost II* the first computer game with a credit list that sounds more like the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* than a game-development team.

French's credits include participation in the development of the Lunar Module Descent Engine; working at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory on the Mariner, Viking, and Voyager programs; and serving as the advanced study manager for planetary programs and systems definition manager for the SP-100 space nuclear power plant program. His specialty is in propulsion, and his main task will be to ensure that the structures, vehicles, payloads, propulsion, and so forth are all plausible, both in appearance and in terms of performance.

Dr. Black worked at the NASA Ames Research Center from 1972 to 1988, where he was chief of the theoretical studies branch, deputy chief of the space science division, and the first chairman of the Ames Basic Research Council. He'll be in charge of verifying the authenticity of the star systems and planets that appear in the game.

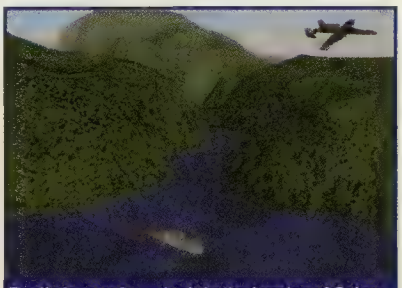
But it wasn't a lack of realism that caused most gamers to complain about *Outpost*; it was a question of promises made and not kept.

"We've listened to a lot of complaints and done a lot of research, and we're doing everything in our power to address those issues," says Kloos. "The number one problem we had with *Outpost* was promising features and not delivering them. That will definitely *not* happen with *Outpost II*. We spent a lot of time up front doing a design spec, so we knew exactly what we could and couldn't do in the time we allotted to develop the game.

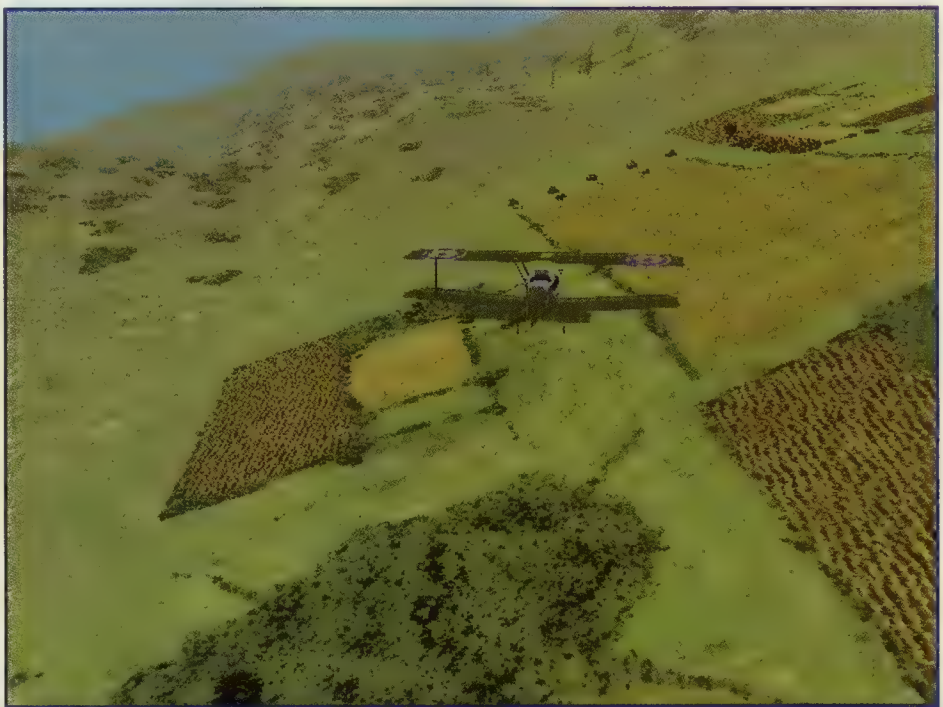
"Another change we made was in location: *Outpost* was done at Sierra's Oakhurst division, which is much more expert at making adventure games," Kloos says. "We brought *Outpost II* up to the Dynamix division in Eugene, Oregon, where there's a lot more strategy and simulation gamers and programmers. So it's in a different development and testing environment, one more suited to the subject matter. We're not saying that alone will eliminate every problem, but that — along with having been through it once and learning that you've got to deliver what you promise — should make a big difference."

Aside from the absence of promised features, Sierra's market research on *Outpost* revealed two other complaints: Novices and veterans alike felt the game moved too slowly, and that it was too difficult to get started.

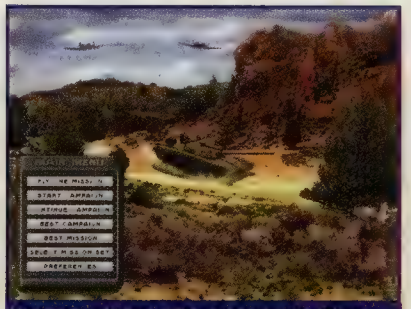
"What we've tried to do with *Outpost II* is figure out what we can put out there that will be new and different and challenging, and we've tried several things to speed up gameplay," Kloos says.



Realistic terrain — be it in the jungles of Colombia or the deserts of the Persian Gulf — is the hallmark of Sierra's current crop of simulations.



Just as in *EarthSiege II*, the texture-mapped terrain and vehicle graphics in *Red Baron II* are among the best to ever grace a simulation. Look Ma, no flat polygons!



Veterans will feel right at home with *Silent Thunder*, which features many of the same gameplay options that made *Aces Over Europe* and *Aces of the Pacific* runaway hits.

Gone, too, is the apocalyptic setting that sent you exploring for new worlds to inhabit in *Outpost*; in the sequel, you'll be journeying to the stars simply because you're able to.

Selecting a planet to colonize will also be handled differently. "After you pick a star system, you'll be able to choose from 40 or 50 stars," says Kloos, "and these are astronomically accurate — real stars that we know of in our galaxy."

Players still harboring a grudge over *Outpost*'s shortcomings won't have long to wait to find out once and for all if Sierra really listened to them: *Outpost II* is scheduled to ship this coming June.

Rama: New World, New Series

What do you do when you manage to get Gentry Lee to come to Eugene, Oregon? You talk him into working on two games at once, of course. That's just what Sierra did, so in addition to *Outpost II*, Lee is busy at work on *Rama*, the first in a series of science-fiction adventure games based on the Rama novels he co-wrote with Arthur C. Clarke. Kloos says "Gentry is extremely passionate about *Rama*. Although he's never designed a PC game before, he's played a lot of PC games; it was after playing *Outpost* that he decided to contact us about creating computer games."

Perhaps a quick description of *Rama* is in order for those of you not familiar with the novels. Rama is the name of a spacecraft — a big one, about the size of a county — manned by extraterrestrials and which houses an environment similar to Earth's. Different parts of Rama are named after the things they bring to mind in humans: The Great Plains, for instance, is a flat, wide-open expanse. Rama is inhabited, naturally enough, by Ramans, but during the ship's travels they've brought other species on board.

How does the player wind up on a massive spacecraft? Well, during one of its journeys, the Raman ship was spotted by observers on Earth, and 12 astronauts were sent up to investigate. Just as in any good science fiction story, the 12 were a varied lot — a couple with military backgrounds, a couple of journalists to send images and the story back to Earth, several scientists, etc.



3D explosions are just one of the new technologies Sierra's Dynamix division is using in *Silent Thunder*.



The Persian Gulf is just one of three Theaters of Operations Sierra is planning to include in *Silent Thunder*.

Unfortunately, one of the twelve has a heart attack and dies aboard the ship. When the game opens, you've been chosen to replace the doctor, and at that point you begin to explore the ship and learn about the Ramans.

"One of the cool things about *Rama* is that we'll be going to Sri Lanka to film Arthur C. Clarke, who'll be doing the prologue to the game and a couple of clips that will be used after death scenes," Kloos says. "When the player makes a mistake and dies, Arthur will appear and give them some advice and encouragement."

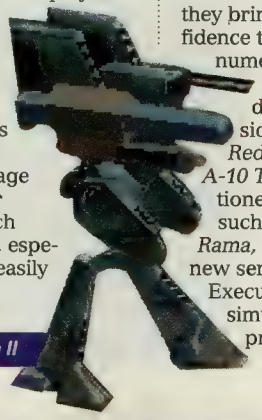
Rama is still a long way from completion — it's not expected to ship until October of 1996. At this stage in the process, it's hard for Kloos to estimate how much play time users can expect, especially since a player could easily spend many hours simply roaming the ship. "There's also a museum on Rama," says Kloos, "where you can go in and learn how to control some of the creatures on the ship, so that could extend the gameplay, too."

What is Gentry Lee's reaction to designing a computer game? "I think he was surprised at the level of detail and the sorts of questions that have to be dealt with," says Kloos. "It's going down to a level of minutiae that he probably didn't expect. He came into it with a story, but now he's thinking much more in terms of interaction — and as any designer can tell you, there's a lot of difference between the two."

Dynamic Doings at the Dynamix Division

Some of the most exciting products Sierra has slated for release are being developed at Sierra's Dynamix division. This is the part of Sierra that specializes in simulations and strategy games, and they bring to their new projects the confidence that comes from racking up numerous awards for past efforts.

Several of the titles being developed at the Dynamix division are sequels — *EarthSiege II*, *Red Baron II*, *Silent Thunder* (i.e., *A-10 Tank Killer II*), and the aforementioned *Outpost II* — while others, such as *MetalStorm* and *Return to Rama*, will hopefully be the start of new series. Jay Bala-Krishnan, the Executive Producer for Sierra's simulations, and Frank Evers, the producer of *EarthSiege II* and *Silent Thunder*, have a distinct



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Product Information Number 82

vision for Sierra's latest simulations lineup.

Bala-Krishnan was understandably hesitant to name specific release dates for these games, but just a glimpse at the list will give you an idea of how incredibly busy the sims/strategy department is: Early spring will see the arrival of *Silent Thunder, EarthSiege II,* and *MetalStorm* (a strategy game set in the EarthSiege game world), followed by *Red Baron II* in May or June. But that's not all. Frank Evers says "We're creating multiplayer versions of all these titles for the ImagiNation Network at the same time" — news that should have simulation fans everywhere drooling.

That's a lot of big-name products to have in development, but Sierra can afford it, thanks to the deal they made when AT&T bought the ImagiNation Network operation.

"Sierra sold the entire INN operation to AT&T last December, and in addition to cash we received a development license," says Bala-Krishnan. "In other words, AT&T funds Sierra with a certain amount of dollars — the whole deal is worth around $20 million over three years. What that funding enables us to do is create games that we can market as stand-alone products, and it gives AT&T great multi-player games to put on the ImagiNation Network. It's a classic win-win situation."

Evers points out that the AT&T-Sierra agreement "also allows us to get into the network world, and a lot of our games in 1996 will be network-enabled, in *addition* to the INN versions. So we're getting into the modem-to-modem, online, and network aspects of gaming in a very big way."

Both Bala-Krishnan and Evers see multi-player games as the real future of PC entertainment, and their development strategies reflect that fact. Evers says, "what we're essentially doing is developing 'black box' technology that will allow you to use your games online, irrespective of the type of connection you have. Be it CompuServe, directly over the Internet, America Online, or whatever, the software will figure out what the connection structure is and allow you to play the game based on how much information can be passed back and forth."

Another key ingredient in the next generation of Sierra simulations is the way game worlds are conceived and



The cockpit view in *EarthSiege II* can be as simple — or as sophisticated — as you like, making it easier for newcomers to feel at home with a potentially overwhelming array of instrumentation.



An extensive list of new weapons is just one of the many enhancements found in *EarthSiege II*, which also features a new vehicle — the Razor — capable of air travel.

Meanwhile, Back in California...

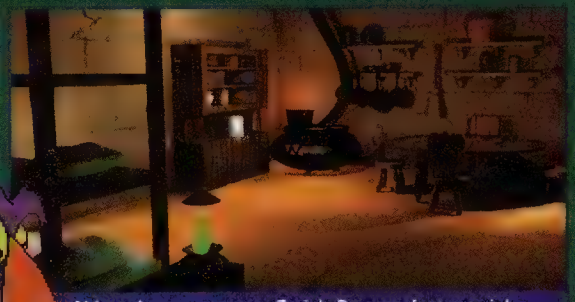
You might get the idea that the Dynamix division is the only part of Sierra working on new games — but the Oakhurst guys are pretty busy too, with three new titles in the pipeline: *Torin's Passage, Shivers,* and *CRY.SYS.*

TORIN'S PASSAGE

"I've finished working on a completely new world," says Al Lowe, the man infamous for giving birth to the Leisure Suit Larry series. The world he's referring to is the one found in *Torin's Passage*, which should be out by the time you read this.

One thing *Torin's Passage* does share with Lowe's previous games is a third-person perspective, though the graphics here are more reminiscent of *King's Quest VII* than *Larry VI*.

"There's a lot more animation in this game than in any game I've ever done," says Lowe, "because I wanted to have a new look, do something different. We used cel-based animation so that we could do whatever we wanted to with the characters, stretching and shrinking and blowing them apart, things that are harder to do with rotoscoped characters."



Al Lowe's newest game, *Torin's Passage*, features rich graphics, cartoon-style animations, and a musical score by Academy-Award winner Michel LaGrande.

Unlike any of the other games Sierra has in production, *Torin's Passage* will definitely run under DOS as well as Windows 3.1 and Windows 95, and will feature an all-digital musical score by Oscar-winner Michel LaGrande (He won Best Score for *Summer of 42, Yentl,* and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*)

Continued on page 192



The texture-mapped objects in *EarthSeige II* look so good that you might lose a battle while you're marveling at all the details of your Herc. Sierra expects *EarthSeige II* to ship sometime in the early Spring.



There's more to *EarthSeige II* than blowing up robots; to survive the campaign, you'll have to manage your resources and salvage every ounce of available materials.

created. Evers says, "We're changing the way in which we create our worlds, and we're investing a lot of money in what I'll call 'world generators' — technology that allows us to create the space in which players will be competing. What you'll see in our games in the future is a lot more of an organic feel, and endless playability."

This "organic worlds" concept is at the core of what Bala-Krishnan calls Virtual Battlefields, and he uses *Red Baron II* to explain the concept. "Let's say you're flying a *Red Baron II* mission, and you're assigned to a certain squadron and location. You get in your plane and head toward a front, and at that moment there may be numerous battles occurring that you don't know about; they're taking place in the computer. Fifty miles to the north, there might be an enemy and a friendly dogfighting; fifty miles to the east, some friendlies are pounding the enemy infantry, and so forth. You head north and come in visual range of the dogfight — and at that moment it goes from being a virtual battle to a real battle. You could sit there and watch it, or you could join in. When you leave and head south again, the battle collapses back into the computer and continues being fought until it is resolved."

That's pretty heady stuff, but even more noteworthy is the fact that these battles aren't scripted; instead, they're generated on the fly using sophisticated AI technologies that create conditions that lead to battles — so if you fly the mission again, that dogfight may not take place. And Bala-Krishnan says that your actions can change what scenarios are generated: "If your squadron has lost a lot of planes up to that point, you may not see many friendlies because there just aren't that many left."

Let the Games do the Talking

But what about specific new games? What can we look for in the sequels, all of which are based on highly acclaimed titles, as well as the brand-new *MetalStorm*?

The first game out of the gate will probably be *Silent Thunder*. It's a different kind of simulation for the Dynamix division in that none of the missions are historical; instead, they're based on possible conflicts in Colombia, (drug lords gone mad), Korea (totalitarian dictator gone mad), and the Persian Gulf (a mustachioed guy in camouflage gone mad). The terrain graphics are

Meanwhile, Back in California...

Continued from page 191

SHIVERS

This graphically rich horror adventure mixes elements of *Myst*, *The 7th Guest*, and *Jewels of the Oracle*. You play as a teenager pressured by your friends into spending the night in a museum. And this isn't your run-of-the-mill museum, where the scariest thing you might encounter is a stuffed lion or a dinosaur skeleton; Dr. Windlenot's Museum of the Strange and Unusual is crammed full of occult artifacts and other objects related to the supernatural.

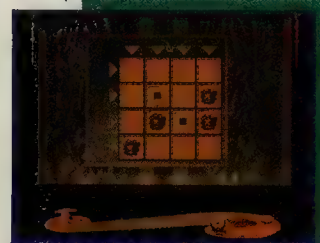
It turns out that Dr. Windlenot, in his quest for the bizarre, has unwittingly released a horde of evil entities known as the Ixupi, who have locked his spirit in one of the urns that once imprisoned them. As you explore the museum, they attack you, draining you of life force bit by bit. Your goal, obviously, is to make it through the night alive — but to do that you must capture all of the Ixupi.

Shivers producer Marcia Bales says she chose a *Myst*-style perspective because "we wanted to have gorgeous backgrounds. Every background was rendered in 3D, but we also touched them up in Photoshop, and the results are spectacular." What makes it even more impressive is the sheer number of backgrounds in the game — close to 3,000, says Bales.

One of the more intriguing aspects behind the creation of *Shivers* is that this is the first adventure game Bales has ever produced; her previous work was solely on educational titles. It's a tall order asking a rookie to make a game on the level of *Shivers*, but Bales got a little assistance from renowned adventure-game designer and Sierra co-founder Roberta Williams.

But while Williams was a big help, this is *not* a Roberta Williams game. "She couldn't help a lot with the design," says Bales, "but she helped me organize my thoughts on how to do an adventure game — when I first started work on *Shivers* I didn't know how to separate the whole picture from the details. She was a great teacher, without stepping in and making it her game."

Continued on page 194



To defeat the Ixupi, all you have to do is find the urns in which they were imprisoned — but first you'll have to open doors by solving logic puzzles like this one.



Your goal in *Shivers* is to explore the strange museum built by Dr. Windlenot, the nutty guy in the pith helmet pictured here.

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Product Information Number 174

unquestionably some of the best ever seen in a flight sim.

"*Silent Thunder* will straddle the line between a real flight-sim and something that has a Hollywood spin on it," says Evers. "The emphasis is on making it *feel* real; when you fly just above the jungle canopy, it will really *look* like a jungle, with running water, waterfalls, etc. But we're also going to take some artistic liberty to make the game more exciting — you'll see gunfire and missiles coming at you so fast that it'll almost feel like the Death Star trench run in *Star Wars*. Instead of concentrating solely on making everything letter-perfect, we're trying to create 'magical realism,' like you get from a really good movie."

Red Baron II, on the other hand, looks to be much more realistic: Besides incorporating the Virtual Battlefield technology mentioned earlier, Dynamix brought in *Falcon 3.0* lead programmer Gary Stottlemyer to head up the project. You'll be able to fly French, German, and English aircraft over a world that's constantly evolving to reflect events that have taken place so far, and the terrain graphics — well, they were created using the same technology found in *Silent Thunder* and *EarthSiege II*. This one should be hot.

EarthSiege II picks up where *EarthSiege* left off. In the first game, mankind forced the Cybrids to retreat to the moon, but now they've remobilized and launched a new invasion. In addition to vastly improved visuals, the Dynamix team has added the Razor, a flying vehicle that gives *EarthSiege II* an entirely new dimension. And in *EarthSiege II*, the terrain makes a true difference in tactics — many battles will be determined by how you use the terrain. There's even a whole series of missions that takes place on the moon!



Talk about graphic variety: There's a whole set of missions in *EarthSiege II* that take place on the moon!

EarthSiege II also differs from its predecessor in that it's being designed for newbies and veterans alike. Evers says that "*EarthSiege* tended to alienate newcomers: They took one look at the 500 dials in the cockpit and ran away. We're making it easier for novices to get into the action with a simplified cockpit — radar, gun, and joystick — but veteran players will still be able to play the game in the more complex mode."

The odd man out here is *MetalStorm*, a strategy game set in the EarthSiege universe. Playing from an isometric view and with pre-rendered graphics, you control Hercs much like a general controlling armored divisions — an exciting prospect, given that *MetalStorm* will ship with multi-player modem capabilities. A Random Scenario generator guarantees that every mission will be entirely different, and once you issue orders you'll see some pretty outstanding animations as the Hercs march into combat. *MetalStorm* will also appear on INN, where its turn-based gameplay will be a natural.

Quality, Not Quantity

Keeping track of everything Sierra's working on is enough to make even our heads spin. It's obvious Sierra understands the prominence PC gaming is about to assume, and they also know that to be a leader in that market they must continually strive for excellence. From what we've seen, it looks like they're on the right track.

PCG

Meanwhile, Back in California...

Continued from page 192

CRY.SYS

Like Marcia Bales, *CRY.SYS* developer Ward Makielski came from an edutainment background — and also like Bales, his first game has all the makings of a real winner.

It doesn't hurt any that the story setting up *CRY.SYS* is great. Realizing that a holocaust is imminent, groups of people have placed themselves in cryo-stasis to preserve their bodies so they may emerge unscathed after the disaster. But this isn't old-fashioned, freeze-me-'til-you-find-the-cure stuff; an artificial intelligence program has also been created to entertain and educate them throughout the process.

But we all know what happens when you give computers this much control over human life: The AI routine goes berserk, killing all but two of the would-be survivors — a man and a woman — while they're still in storage. Eventually, Earth becomes habitable, and the man is released from cryo-stasis — but the computer refuses to release the woman. And it doesn't take a biology professor to realize that without a female around, the chances of repopulating the planet take a real nose-dive.

Freeing the female means "possessing" a robot and entering cyberspace, which is set up as a series of virtual worlds based on different eras in mankind's past — prehistoric, ancient civilizations, the industrial age, contemporary information age, a cyberpunk era, and so forth.

The single-player game is more action-oriented, with the player using the keypad to maneuver a robot of his or her choosing through a labyrinthine environment from an isometric 3D perspective; in the multi-player game, says Makielski, "you'll plot your moves in turn-based fashion. The turn-clock keeps ticking, and you fill up a queue with the commands you want to the robot to execute; once you lock in, say, four commands, you can't change those commands. So it becomes almost like a game of chess."

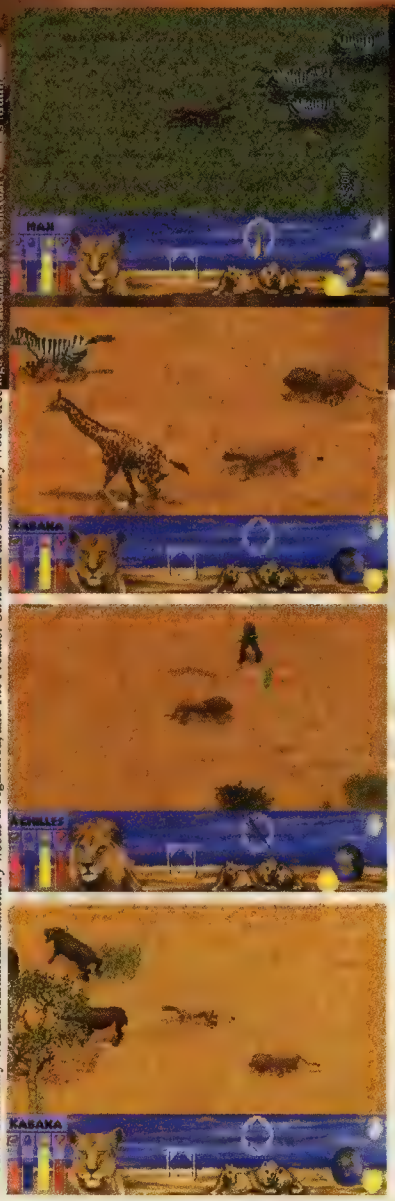
It's an interesting mix of styles, especially when you consider what *CRY.SYS* was supposed to be. Makielski says, "Initially we were working on a game to teach programming. We kept coming back to the idea that we wanted to do something that we would be extremely fun to play, and kept pushing the entertainment value of the product. Well, we'd been chomping at the bit to do an arcade game — something with the edge of a *Doom* or *Descent*, even though *CRY.SYS* isn't like those games — so the powers-that-be finally conceded and said 'OK, fine, you guys go nuts with this thing,' and they basically cut loose the reins on the condition that we made sure that it was a very cool game."

And that's just what Makielski and the *CRY.SYS* team did. "At that point, we had two or three months of just the artists creating robots, trying to determine the look we needed. The programmers jumped in near the end of August, and we should have it out by late February or early March."

"I just escaped two poachers, brought down a wildebeest, and kept a pack of hyenas at bay... *all before lunch!*"

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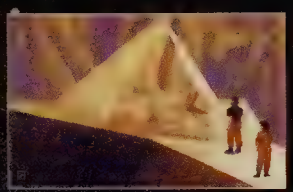
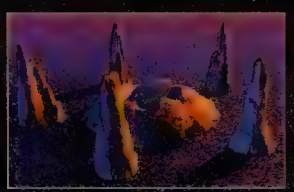
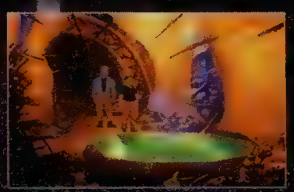
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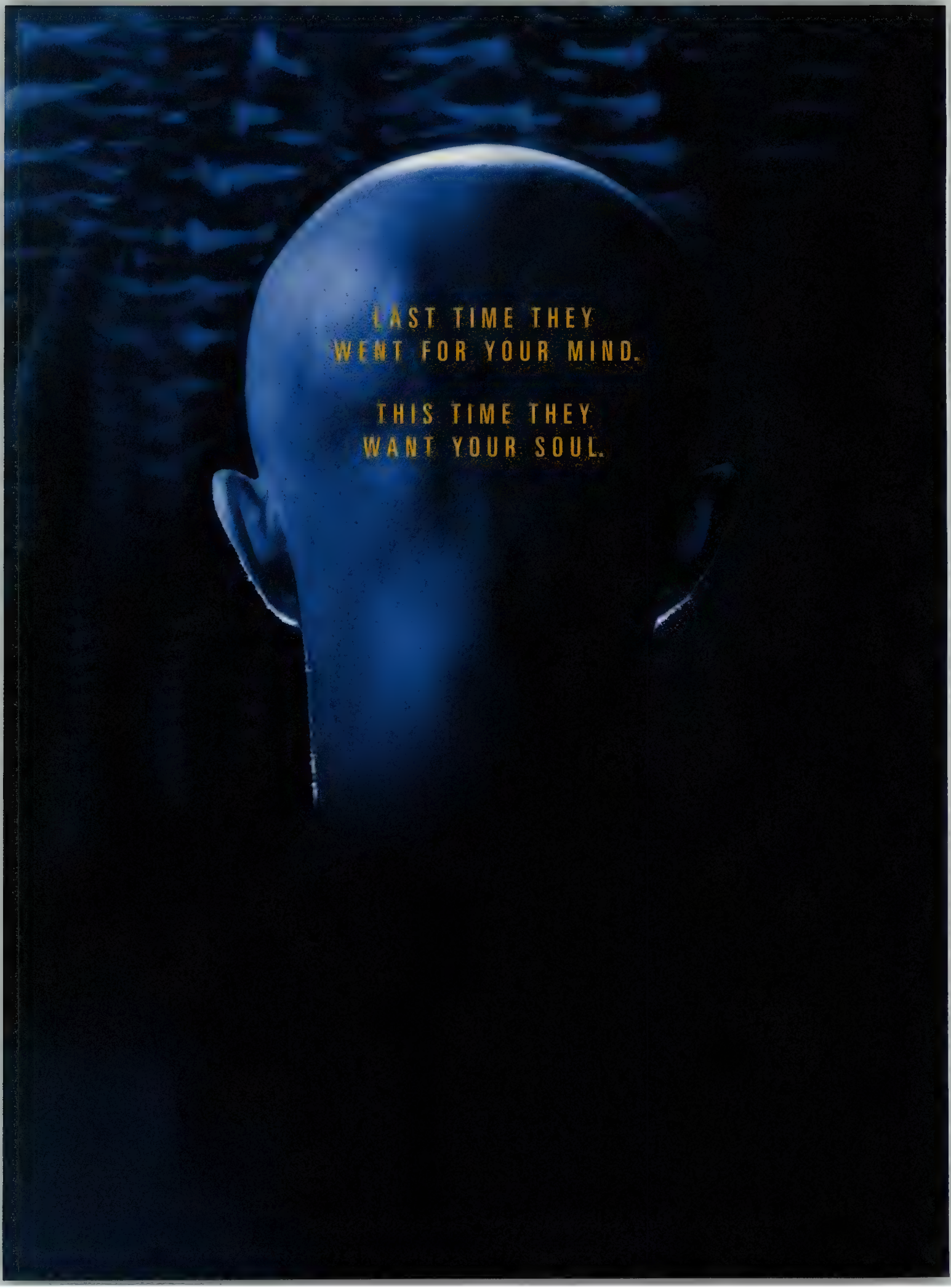





CHECK OUT THE DIG INTERACTIVE DEMO IN SELECT MAGAZINES AND RETAIL OUTLETS OR VISIT THE DIG HOMEPAGE AT http://www.lucasarts.com

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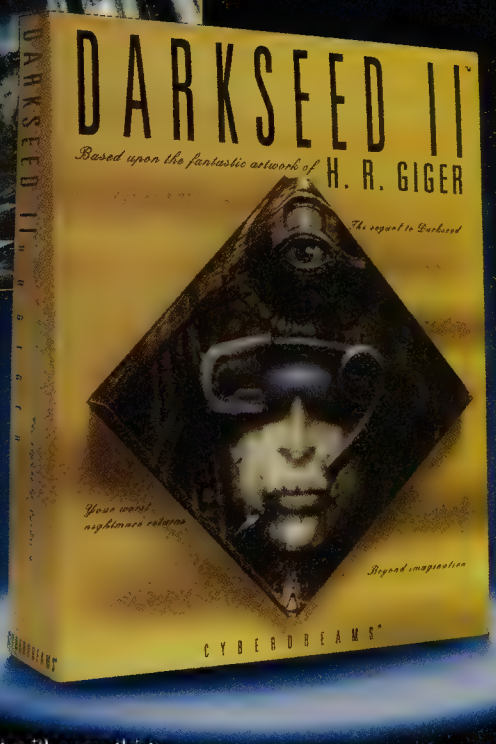


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LAST TIME THEY
WENT FOR YOUR MIND.
THIS TIME THEY
WANT YOUR SOUL.

The horror of Dark Seed is back. Mike Dawson awakens from his nervous breakdown to find himself accused of murdering his high school sweetheart, Rita. Caught between the H.R. Giger inspired Dark World of the Ancients and the Normal World, he must find the real killer before the killer finds him.





Chilling cinematic sequences, eerie alien conversations and 75 unique 3-D landscapes make this psycho thriller a real challenge.

Rita's murder is part of the Ancients' fiendish plan to conquer the Earth, and Mike's soul is their key. Explore the hidden Dark World to try to foil the Ancients' new plot and, perhaps, earn Mike's sanity. Immerse yourself in worlds of textured 3-D graphics. Interact with over thirty characters. View haunting cinematic sequences. The path can take many turns and will be a persistent challenge to all who accept it. As for Mike, his fate is in your hands as is the ultimate fate of the world.

THE TERROR IS WITHIN

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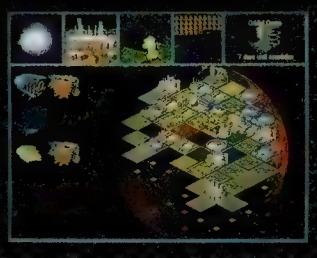
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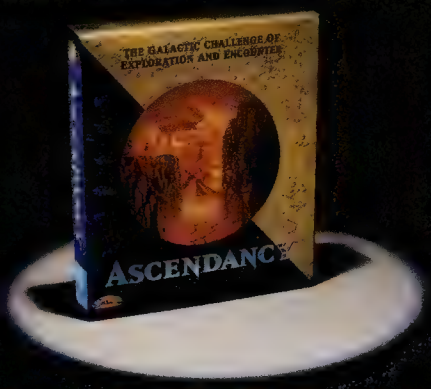


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Brace yourself!

You're about to dive into our biggest reviews section ever. Before you turn the page, you'll probably want to feed the pets, take the phone off the hook, let someone know where you'll be, and — for God's sake — be sure you've got food and water within reach; we don't want anyone's health to suffer as a result of our unbridled enthusiasm.

Take a glance to the right, and you'll see there's a lot to be enthusiastic about. With the holidays upon us, game publishers have dropped a ton of new titles on us, and quite a few of them are terrific. We expected to have more Editors' Choice games than usual, but this month's crop is huge.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

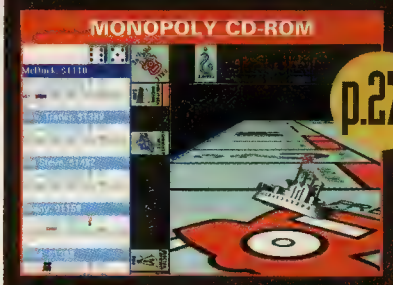
Each and every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our coveted Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn the Editors' Choice, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PC Gamer* Editors' Choice logo on a game at your local software shop, you can bet it's among the best of the best.





















Crusader: No Remorse

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Need a break from the *Doom* clones? *Crusader* delivers non-stop action from a new perspective.

Category: Action-Adventure

Developer: Origin

Publisher: Origin 5918 W. Courtyard Dr., Austin, TX 78730 (512) 434-4263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; VESA or PCI local-bus video; SVGA; MS-DOS 5.0 or higher; Mouse	Pentium; Supported sound card; Programmable gamepad or joystick

M.S.R.P.: $59.95



Thanks to the graviton generator and a fairly healthy power supply, the Silencer can utilize this force shield against a hail of bullets.

Within minutes of loading up the first mission in Origin's new action-adventure shoot-'em-up *Crusader: No Remorse*, I was so consumed by the sheer fun, gleeful carnage, and challenge this game provides, that games I've been waiting months to play — *Command & Conquer*, *Hexxen* and *FIFA Soccer '96* — were left sitting on my computer shelf collecting dust until I reached *Crusader*'s tense climax.

This is, without a doubt, one of the best action-adventure titles of the year, and — are you ready for this? It looks absolutely nothing like *Doom*.

With *Crusader*, Origin chose to buck the trend for first-person perspective action games, opting for a three-quarter top-down view similar to those in *Syndicate* or *X-COM* to display the on-screen action.

This provides a unique perspective for *Crusader*'s brand of murderous mayhem, with crisp, SVGA graphics used to render the people, objects and buildings, all in exacting detail. Add to all this a strong sci-fi story line, a wealth of character control options and more Hollywood blockbuster-style explosions than you can shake a stick at, and you've got an action game that's just as conducive to mindless bloodletting as any *Doom*-clone.

You play the game as a Silencer, one of the elite, armor-clad shock troops in the service of the WEC — the World Economic Consortium. The WEC is an oppressive governing body run by shadowy figures that ruthlessly decide the fate of the world and treat average citizens as nothing more than mindless drones.

During a routine "suppression" mission for the WEC, something goes horribly wrong, and instead of finding a band of free-thinking rebels intent on destroying the consortium's hold on the world, you find only peace-loving civilians at the site. You disobey orders to kill the civilians, and the WEC turns its guns on you, leaving you with only one option: join the rebellion and put an end to the tyranny of the WEC.

You begin exacting your revenge on the WEC in 15 missions that serve the rebellion — destroy a power generator, rescue prisoners, capture scientists, etc. — as you guide your character through one enormous level after another. There are some adventure game trappings in your dealings with

STRANGE RELATIONS

Nearly two years ago, Origin released what many had hoped would be the crowning achievement in the Ultima line of roleplaying games — *Ultima VIII: Pagan*. Graphically, it was superior to previous Ultima games; unfortunately, *Pagan* was far from the perfect sequel everyone had been hoping for. Riddled with problems like steep system hardware requirements, a mouse-only control interface, and heavy emphasis on arcade-style run-and-jump action that was complicated by dodgy controls, *Pagan* failed to appeal to even die-hard Ultima fans, who were used to the often demanding nature of Origin's brand of computer roleplaying.

While Ultima creator Richard Garriott promises the upcoming *Ultima IX* won't use the same engine as *Pagan*, Origin didn't give up on the basic concept behind *Pagan* — after seeing the potential for a great action game lurking under the surface, Origin began turning *Pagan* into *Crusader*.



Pagan didn't add much to the Ultima mystique with its clumsy interface and arcade-style action. But it wasn't a total loss, since it paved the way for *Crusader*.

After a few nips and tucks to streamline performance, improve the control interface, and update the graphics to Super VGA, *Crusader* emerges as an action game tour de force.



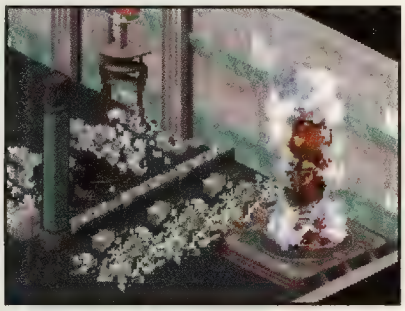
The consortium's mad scientist hams it up after taking a few bullets from the Silencer.



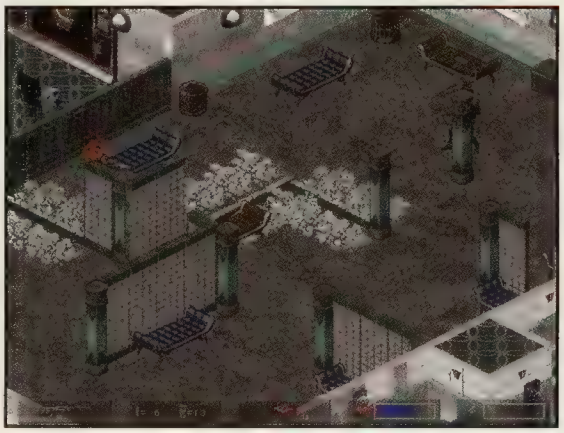
Darn! Only got three barrels that time. This is just a medium-sized fireball compared to most of *Crusader*'s screen-filling explosions.

both the rebels and WEC, with full-motion video clips depicting mission briefings and brief character interactions, but at its core *Crusader* is a high-energy action game with a bit of platform-puzzler thrown in.

In *Crusader*, you basically shoot anything that gets in your way and try not to get killed, solving minor puzzles along the way. You find keys to open doors, figure out how to turn force fields on or off, etc. But it's *Crusader*'s wide variety of control options that make the action you'll find here so different from what you've seen before. You can run, duck, roll left or right, jump, and of course, strafe as you tackle wave after wave of bad guys. It's all controlled with either the keyboard or a keyboard/mouse combination (Origin didn't include joystick support, so you may want to check into a programmable joystick or gamepad). If you're willing to spend just a few moments getting the basics down, you'll appreciate the amazing amount of control at your disposal.



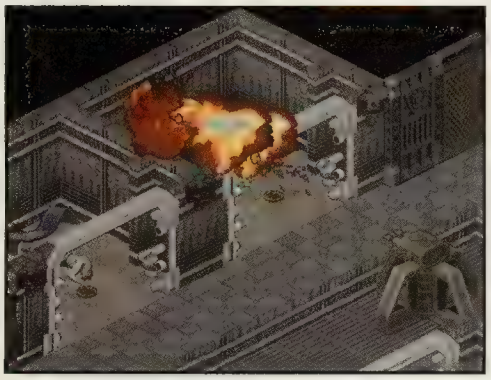
Once inside the consortium's domain, you'll use these teleportation devices to move from place to place.



You'll fight your way through a wide range of levels, including the smartly appointed offices and boardrooms of the consortium's top administrators.

And don't think you won't need it. The multi-level consortium bases are packed with an assortment of bad guys, security systems, and radioactive hazards; you'll need all kinds of fancy moves to complete your missions.

Not only will you battle it out with consortium goons, you have the choice of murdering civilians and workers or laying waste to consortium property with an assortment of high-tech weapons. And because your entire environment has been designed so every shot you fire *does* something, the results are always explosive. Launch a few grenades into a crowd of workers or guards, and they'll run around on fire; shoot a barrel filled with radioactive material, and you'll be rewarded with a massive fireball that engulfs three quarters of the screen.



During one horrifying scene, you'll watch as the evil consortium scientist murders these rebel prisoners.

The violence depicted in the game is as shocking as it sounds; people burst into flames, screaming their lungs out, and workers beg for their lives with cries of "Please, don't shoot!" Some parental discretion is definitely in order (Origin felt so strongly about it, they voluntarily increased the "Teen" rating they got from the RSAC to a "Mature" rating). And there aren't any options to tone down the violence as in *Rise of the Triad* or *Witchaven*.

But given the mainly mature audience for this type of game, *Crusader* is right on the mark. It has plenty of fast-paced action, some minor puzzling, and enough gameplay to last more than the average weekend.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

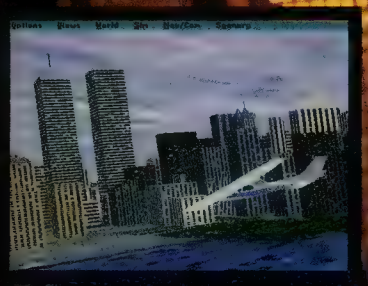
93%

HIGHS: Incredible graphics, sound and gameplay.

LOWS: Graphic violence, unsuitable for youngsters; no joystick support.

BOTTOM LINE: A great alternative to first-person shoot-'em-ups, and a definite must-play for action fans.

Remember, as of the twin towers and spin recovery above Times is a pilot's first



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Product Information Number 132

FIFA Soccer '96

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Electronic Arts

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Mouse; Gamepad; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Mix a detailed sports sim with stunning graphics, and you've got one heckuva game.

While we Americans are pulling for the Cowboys or the 49ers, the rest of the world just doesn't really care. They're too busy following the world's most popular sport — football — instead of the bizarre, brutal, blood-sport that we Yanks know by the same name.

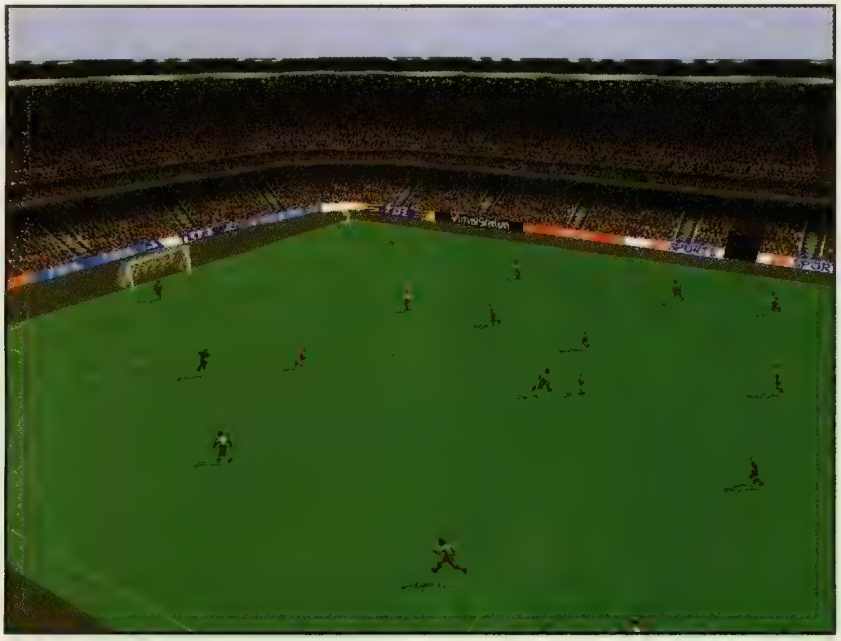
And maybe they're onto something. After playing several hours of *FIFA Soccer '96*, I'm a believer. If you just don't get the attraction of soccer, this sim might make a believer out of you, too. And if you're already a fan, this is the game you've been waiting for.

EA's first version of FIFA — *FIFA International Soccer* — was a flashy sim with fun, sometimes arcade-style, gameplay, but it was far from a complete package, lacking some of the statistical depth of other sims. This one, though, has it all: 60 teams, league and tournament play, plenty of statistics, modem play, multi-player options for as many as four players, and enough strategy to satisfy Vince Lombardi. That's Vince Lombardi, the Italian goalkeeper, of course.

Combine that comprehensive approach with stunning graphics and riveting sound effects, and you've got one heckuva game. You won't find a finer sports simulation.

At the heart of *FIFA Soccer '96* are the graphics, and they are something to see. The revolutionary Virtual Stadium graphics bring the game to life like no other sports sim you've ever seen. The camera pans and swings to give you the best perspective, and the textures and shading render the on-field action in breathtaking realism.

Of course, we all know great graphics don't make a great sports sim all by themselves. Behind those pretty



Check out the detail in this wide-angle view of the stadium. In the high-res mode, you are there.

How Do They Do That?

Aside from the post-game slugfests, one of reasons soccer has become the world's most popular sport is due in part to the sheer athletic ability displayed by the players. They're always in motion, running, jumping, and tumbling around on a field that's longer and wider than the NFL's gridiron, performing moves that would make a gymnast jealous. *FIFA*'s incredible graphics bring all these wonderful moves to life, using some of the most detailed animations we've seen in a PC sports game. Here are just a couple of examples of how realistic the plays look when you get up close and personal.



Bicycle Kick

This incredible move involves the player jumping into the air and performing a complete rotation to kick an airborne ball with incredible force. You'll need to have a clear shot at the ball (no defensemen hanging around) to pull this one off, but you'll savor every moment of it.

Header



You can't use your hands to control the ball in soccer, but any other part of the body is fair game for passing and even scoring. Here the player uses the ol' noggin to pass the ball downfield to another player, before colliding with an opposing teammate. For graphics like this, you'll need a Pentium with lots of RAM.

graphics, *FIFA* offers just about everything a sports sim nut could ask for. You get 60 teams from around the world, and you can play exhibition matches, league seasons, and tournaments. World tournaments match 24 national teams grouped in six regions. Domestic tournaments include eight teams from the same country, vying for the national championship. If you want to bypass tournament play, you can go straight to the single-elimination playoffs. Choose one team to manage, and let the computer instantly simulate the rest of the matches. Teams are rated in six skills areas, while individual players are rated in 14 categories.

Controlling the players — a weakness of the earlier FIFA game — is much improved in this version, but it's still tricky. I strongly recommend a videogame-style controller — maybe something like the Gravis Gamepad. While there's a bit of a learning curve, the game provides an excellent practice mode to let you sharpen your soccer skills. Here you can work on corner kicks, free kicks, scrimmage, penalty kicks, goal kicks, and throw-ins. You also have the option of practicing with or without defending players.

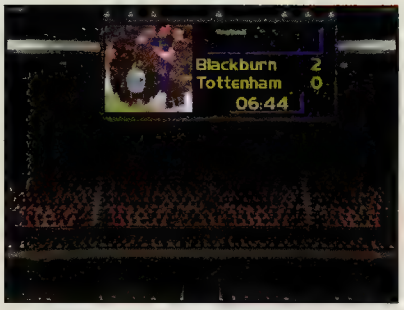
You want strategy? *FIFA Soccer '96* lets you decide how aggressively to spread your players on defense. You also have five formations to choose from, along with five overall offensive and defensive strategies.



This perspective from behind the goal is one of the new views you'll find in *FIFA '96*.

FIFA also excels in the sound department. The action sounds are good enough, but it's the play-by-play audio that sets this game apart from the rest of the sports sim crowd. In almost every other sports sim, I turn off the play-by-play immediately. It may be cool to hear at first, but the halting delivery and non-specific commentary gets old fast. In *FIFA*, though, the audio commentary soars, adding an urgency and a sense of realism that once again sets this sim apart from the rest. The commentator calls the players by names, and really seems to know what's going on in the game. That's pretty impressive, and it makes *FIFA* even more fun to play and adds volumes to the realism set by the graphics.

Statistics have been greatly improved over the previous version of *FIFA*. You can check out league standings, along with league leaders in scoring, fouls, and suspensions. The depth of the stats may not be all that important to casual fans of soccer, but I'd wager that once you get absorbed in the action on-field, you'll appreciate the fact that they're there.



FIFA Soccer's sights and sounds put you in the huge stadiums, surrounded by those raucous soccer fans.

Electronic Arts really deserves some congratulations for this product; *FIFA* is a complete soccer — sorry, that's *football* — simulation, with the best-looking graphics you'll find in a sports sim. Not only does it provide statistical depth to attract die-hard fans, it also serves up plenty of fast-action playability that'll draw in gamers who may have never considered soccer as a fun sport. It's an unbeatable combination.

—Lee Buchanan



In the higher resolution mode, *FIFA*'s graphics are simply the best you'll see in a sports sim.



The on-field views keep you right on top of the action, whether you're controlling the player in action mode or staying on the sidelines as the coach.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

92%

HIGHS: Multiplayer and modem options; brilliant graphics; realistic play; comprehensive league and tournament play.

LOWS: You'll need a Pentium 90 or better to really enjoy the high resolution graphics.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're in the market for a top-notch sports sim, look no further.

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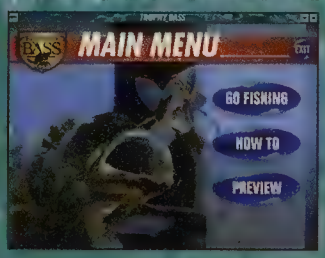
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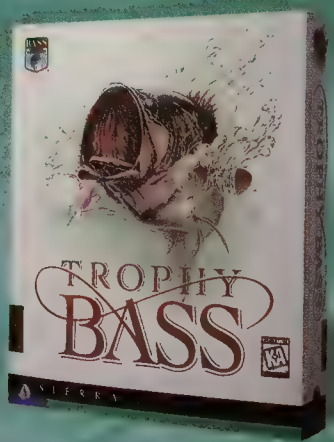
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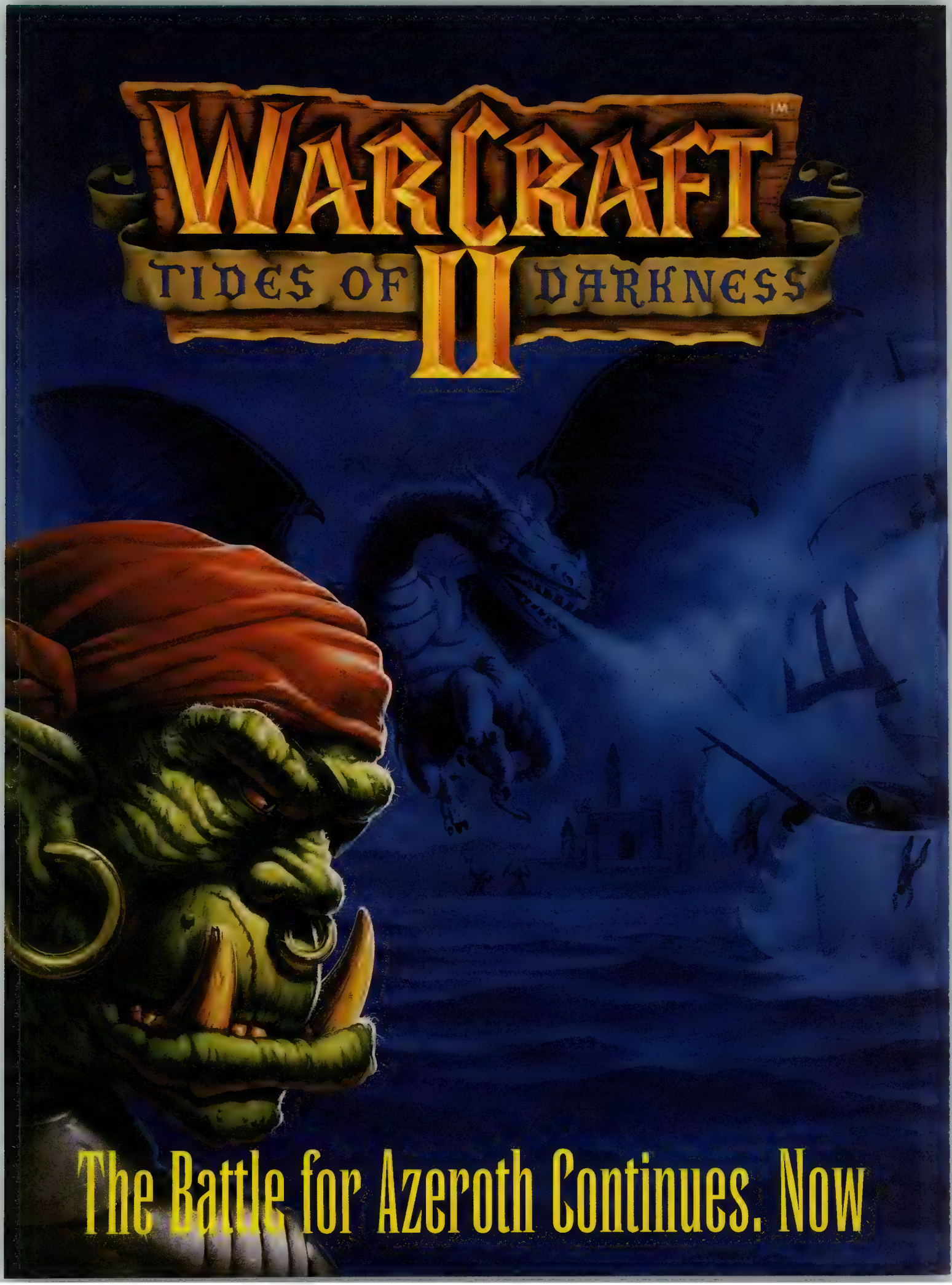




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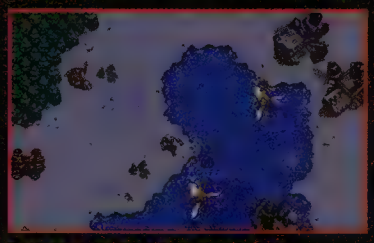
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IntraCorp Inc

Product Information Number 104

Wingnuts

Category: Arcade Shooter

Developer: Rocket Science Games

Publisher: Rocket Science Games, 139 Townsend St., San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 442-5000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; 4MB RAM; Mouse	Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $39.95

This campy shoot-'em-up may not be the greatest game around, but the humor and surprises in *Wingnuts* make it worth a look.

Wingnuts is a high-flying arcade adventure from Rocket Science Games, and it's basically two games in one. At first glance, it's a simple arcade shooter that plays and looks like dozens of games we've seen before. There's some full-motion video footage to tell the story and display the on-screen action, and the action is purely "point-and-shoot."

Set in World War One, *Wingnuts* casts you as a young U.S. pilot attached to the Royal Air Force, and you'll spend most of your time flying above the French countryside busting bogeys and bombing strategic targets. Before each mission, you're given a briefing and some obligatory storytelling, then it's off to the dogfight sequences where you'll fly along a predetermined path, moving your cursor around to fire on enemy planes or take evasive action. If you're successful in shooting down your target or in making a bombing run, you'll be rewarded with a video sequence of a crash or huge explosion. It's pretty standard stuff along the lines of an American Laser Games' shoot-'em-up or LucasArts' *Rebel Assault*. The video quality is good, smooth, and pretty quick to load as it transitions between scenes.

Wingnuts can be challenging at times, with adjustable difficulty levels that make things as demanding as you want. If you enjoy the mindless nature of the action, you'll have a good time — but that's about all you can say for the arcade aspect of the product.

Once you've gone through the missions, though, a much more entertaining side of *Wingnuts* rears its head, adding lots more fun than you'd expect with a relentless series of humorous Easter Eggs. Once you've completed a mission, if you go back to replay it, you'll find the mission briefings or story sequences aren't quite the same. The video footage is identical, but the voices have been replaced with campy overdubs that hint at some of the talent the Rocket Science folks must possess. These scenes have a *Mystery Science Theater 3000* feel, and the dialogue is funny enough that you'll want to play through the entire game all over again. And if you figure out a few special commands (moving your cursor in the right place at the right time or shooting a special target) you'll get special weapons power-ups, more funny screens, and more special surprises.



The Full-Motion Video used in *Wingnuts* is reasonably sharp, and with the added humorous scenes, is a treat to watch.



Bombing runs are usually the last action you'll perform in a mission, and if you're successful, you'll be rewarded with some nice video of your destructive prowess.

Watch Your Tail!



You'll spend most of your time in scenes like this, firing at enemy planes over the French country side. Fail to bring them down in time..



..and you'll have only seconds to shake them from your tail.

As a game, *Wingnuts* is pretty average and doesn't really hold its own against more gamer-oriented fare of *Cyberia* or *Rebel Assault*. But the fun extras in *Wingnuts* are the real attraction, and they're enjoyable enough to make up for the title's failure on the gaming side.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

71%

HIGHS: Wonderfully goofy Easter eggs; a decent shooter with some interesting features.

LOWS: Needs meat in gameplay; fuzzy controls.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're looking for the ultimate shooter, pass on *Wingnuts*, but if you enjoy fun surprises, pick it up.

What darkness conceals, terror reveals...

Mystery sounds through the empty halls and rings from the rafters of a deserted museum.

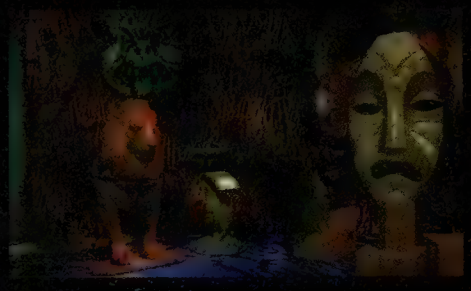
Where is the museum's creator, and the other ill-fated visitors who disappeared so long ago?

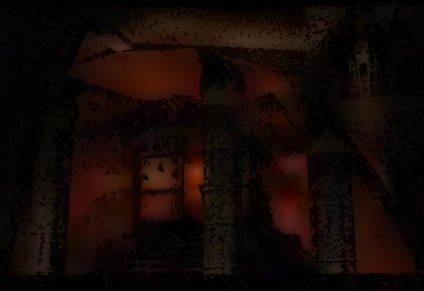
From the shadows, wretched spirits watch for the innocent, the unwary, ready to steal your life's essence. Can you hear the shrieks now, the howls and moans and wails?

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Product Information Number 212

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AUDIO

SIMON & SCHUSTER INTERACTIVE

Magic Carpet 2

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Action

Developer: Bullfrog Productions

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM for VGA, 16MB RAM and SVGA card for Super VGA; 8MB hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; Supported sound card; Mouse, joypad, or joystick

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Last year's mega-hit is back, with more spells, enemies, and rug-riding fun than ever.

1994's *Magic Carpet* — and its sequel, *Magic Carpet 2: The Netherworlds* — may still be the most unique, well, simulations around. *Magic Carpet* came along at a time when the first-person shooter (a la *Doom*) was actually becoming a genre of its own, and *Doom* clones were springing up like dandelions. But this time, the first-person thing was put to such novel use that very few even mentioned it. *Magic Carpet* was a fresh idea, and a great game.

For those of you not familiar with the *Magic Carpet* theme, here's the condensed version. You play as a flying-carpet pilot and wizard, soaring over landscapes and through dark, twisting caverns full of all kinds of evil monsters. You have magic weaponry and defenses (although not much of either at first), both of which require mana to fuel them. You get mana buy blasting monsters, then claiming as your own the resultant balls of golden mana that burst forth from your victims. But in order to *use* the claimed mana, you have to cast a spell to build a castle, which will then send out a balloon to collect and bring back the mana.

During the course of each level, you'll sometimes find new spells to augment your magical arsenal; in *MC 2: Netherworlds*, there are a lot more of these available — 26 in all, each with three levels of intensity available. Whether or not you have enough power to cast any but the most basic spells depends on the size of your castle, because a larger castle can store the loads of mana necessary to cast some of the game's more impressive incantations.

You view the action from a remarkably effective first-person perspective, and in *Netherworlds* you're treated to a frame-rate that's easily better than that of the original. The game supports a high-resolution mode, although to get the action moving acceptably in high-res, you'd better have something like a 133 MHz Pentium.

There are plenty of differences between the original and *MC 2: Netherworlds* — although like the frame-rate, they're more evolutionary than revolutionary. Probably the most noticeable is a new narrative structure imposed over the high-flying action, complete with elaborate 3D-modeled cutscenes and a fatherly mentor whose voice guides you not only from level to level, but within each level from objective to objective.

That's right, objectives. In this *Magic Carpet*, you have to complete a number of specific missions — destroy rival wizard A, destroy old temple, find spell, etc. — within each level in order to move on. Whereas the first game's overall objective (kill all the monsters and rival wizards to reclaim the land) really didn't change much from stage to stage, *MC 2: Netherworlds* is much more a big, linear storyline, and everything you do advances the plot toward its inevitable conclusion.

The structure works to make you feel more "in" the action, as though your actions really mean something. You're not just flying around killing things without any reason — although you most certainly *are* flying around killing things.

As you float around dealing death and gathering mana, you may notice a few visual refinements over the original.



Many times, you'll have to use tele-portals like this one to get around underground — especially before you find the powerful stone-cutting spells like Gravity Well and Earthquake. Look carefully, and you'll see Charles Manson inside!



The between-level cutscenes are very nice, and do a great job of furthering the story. Here we see your ultimate enemy, the fiendish Vissuluth.



One of the tough new enemies awaiting you is this Moon Dweller, a kind of mechanical device equipped with *very* formidable weaponry...

Although the graphics depicting the castles, monsters, and landscapes look pretty much the same (not a bad thing, since the graphics are still plenty good), there are a number of new effects that can be absolutely dazzling.

Take, for instance, the simple concept of darkness. This time around, a number of the levels are night missions, with darkness broken only by your own fireballs as they whiz past castle walls or down narrow, twisting tunnels. And in some of these night missions, you'll see dramatic examples of the designers' use of reflection as the moonlit sky above you glints off the surface of a pond below.

As nice as the effects are, though, I did get the feeling that a few of the levels existed solely as an excuse to show off those great effects and graphics. And I found myself looking forward to those big, bright, outdoor levels.

Another difference, and one related to the game's story-driven style, is that you're often placed in very tough positions, with very few resources, and asked to wipe out, say, a swarm of web-slinging spiders. These particularly challenging little mini-scenarios often take place in caverns, where simply flying away from the danger isn't an option. You have to find a crack or high ledge where you're safe from attack, sneak out just long enough to get a few shots in before your spell power runs low, then dodge back and wait for it to build. These bits add a lot of strategic fun to the game — even if they can be maddeningly difficult.

Probably the best thing about *MC 2: Netherworlds*, though, is that you get new spells to make use of during your struggles (see sidebar). As I've said, even the old ones now have three levels of intensity, so that old castle spell can now produce either a run-of-the-mill castle or, if you gain enough experience casting that one, a castle that will defend itself with fireballs or even lightning strikes. And your fireball spell can now be boosted enough that, when you cast it, it hits its target and dances all around them, like St. Elmo's Fire, until the castee is dead. Very cool.

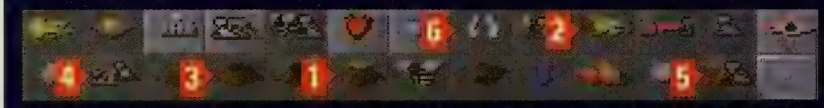
Also very cool are the extensive network- and modem-game options, allowing you and a bunch of friends to go at it head-to-head. You'll get messaging, great response times, and everything else you'd expect in a good multiplayer game.

Of course, the bottom-line question on *MC 2: Netherworlds* is, does it measure up? Is it enough *better* than *Magic Carpet* that it's worth buying if you already own the original? The answer is an easy yes. The goals set for you this time around add new challenge and, combined with the visual effects and new spells, make *MC 2: Netherworlds* a pretty compelling package. And if you've never played the original, *do not* miss this. You'll love it.

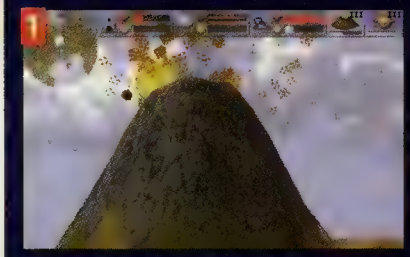
—Ned Gaskins

THE MAGIC OF THE NETHERWORLDS

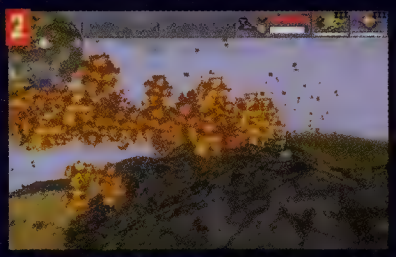
Without a doubt, it's the great variety — and intensity — of magic spells at your disposal that push *Netherworlds* into Editors' Choice country. Here they are, with special attention to a few of our favorites...



Here's the magic-filled menu you can look forward to using — once you've found all the spell jars, that is. Each of these spells has three levels of intensity, for a staggering total of 78 spells in all! They're all useful, but here are a few of the most impressive, at their highest intensity levels:



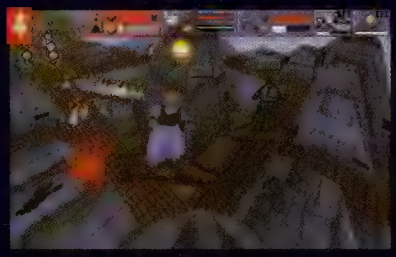
Cast this Volcano spell on a horde of beasties, and they won't know what hit 'em. It leaves this big, smoking tower of destruction as a reminder of what you've wrought.



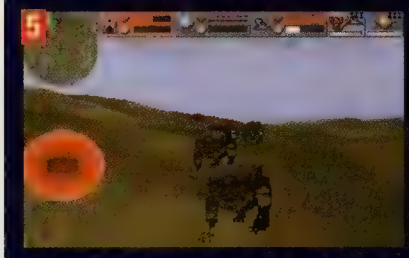
When you hurl the level-three Meteor spell at a castle or pack of nasties, the skies above fill with flame and great destruction results. Get ready to collect that mana!



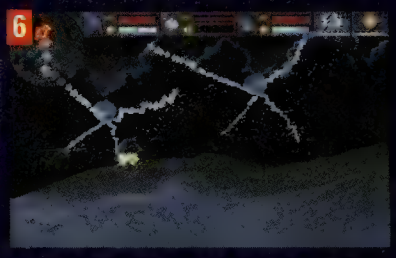
When you're meandering through those caves, cast the Earthquake spell at a nearby wall and just fly through the resulting chasms. With this baby, you make your own paths...



This deadly red hand flies out toward enemy wizards and actually sucks the life right out of 'em when you use the Health Drain spell. A level-three Fireball has much the same effect.



This Alliance Three spell is incredibly fun, as it turns even the meanest monsters into cuddly pets. Even these manticores turn into puppies!



At its highest level, the Lightning spell produces a thunderstorm of lightning bolts that'll fry everything below them.

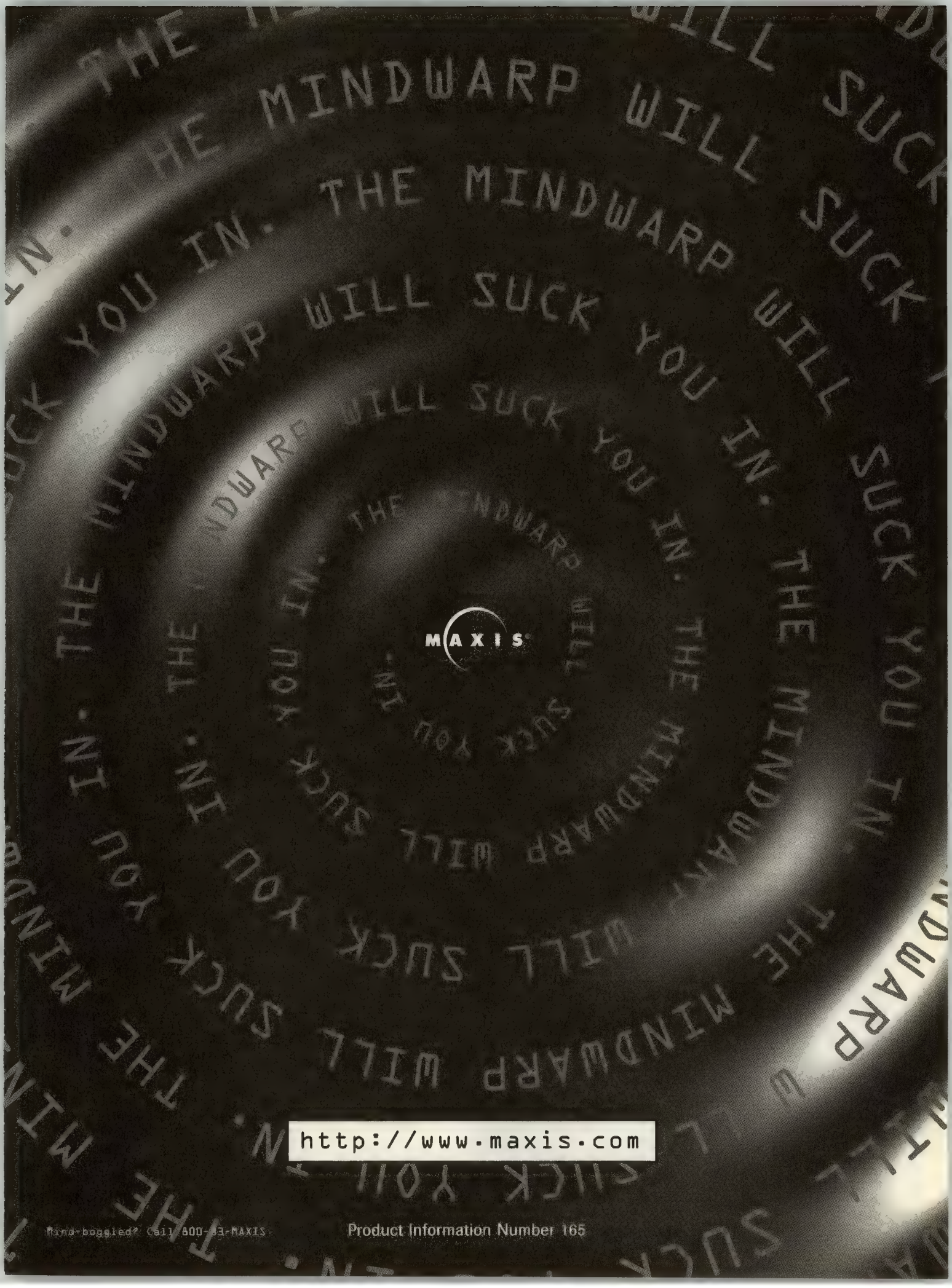
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: A great game made better with new visual effects and a loads of new spells.

LOWS: Some of the visual effects get tiresome; The game doesn't forge as much new ground as it might have.

BOTTOM LINE: More of what you liked in the original — and then some.


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Product Information Number 165

Chaos Control

Category: Arcade Shooter

Developer: Infogrames

Publisher: I•Motion, 1341 Ocean Ave., Box 417, Santa Monica, CA 90401 (800) 443-3386

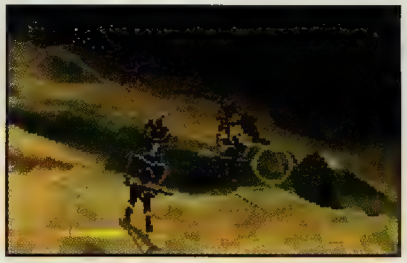
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse; VGA	Sound Blaster or compatible sound card

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

If you liked *Cyberia*'s rollercoaster-ride shoot-'em-up action, *Chaos Control* is right up your alley.



There's plenty troubling our heroine, but that won't stop her from blasting everything in sight.



This army of darkness can be found in the computer virus mission.

The year is 2050, and the Kesh Rhan, an evil and highly advanced civilization, is hungry for new turf — Earth's turf, to be exact. But never fear; you, as Jessica Darkhill, are Earth's best hope against a surprise alien attack. You'll pilot a fighter craft against swarms of enemy ships about to storm earth, and even take a virtual-reality ride inside a bug-infested computer system before the final dramatic showdown.

Other than the narrative elements between missions, the entire game takes place in the cockpit of Jessica's ship. The gameplay is similar to the arcade sequences in *Cyberia* or *Rebel Assault*, where you have no actual control over your ship. Instead, you're riding along a predetermined path and blasting away at countless hordes of incoming ships that swirl in and out of your field of view; you just aim with your mouse and fire.

You've seen it done before, but *Chaos Control* does it better than most. There are two difficulty settings, but even on the easier setting, the swarm of foes are tough, and it'll probably take more than a few tries to get through each level.



Invading earth is one thing, but endangering the Statue of Liberty is another — what nerve!

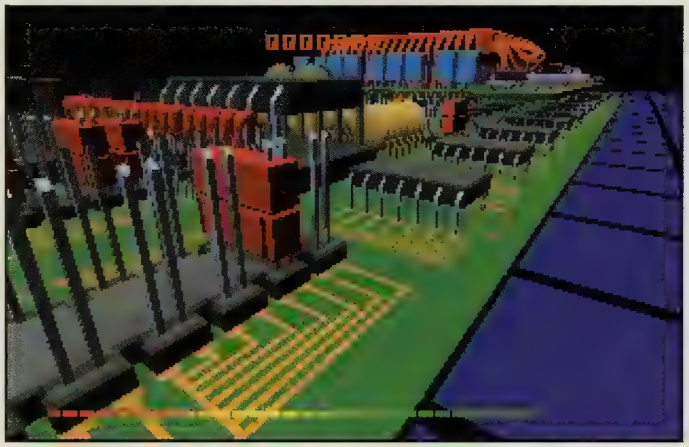
But what makes *Chaos Control* a better-than-average shooter is that it brings some clever little extras to the table, pulling you into the game with sensational graphics and the comic-book-style story of Jessica Darkhill's trials and tribulations.

And it *will* pull you in. The 3D graphics that make up the backgrounds and enemy forces during gameplay are nothing short of brilliant. And the cut-scenes combine the popular Japanese style of animation made famous by the *Speed Racer* cartoons with computer-generated graphics to tell the game's story in a dark, moody tone.

There are four in-depth battle sequences, all building toward your main goal of breaking through the alien defenses and knocking out the Kesh Rhan flagship. Each takes you through unique environments: one takes place in New York City, complete with a thrilling fly-by of the Statue of Liberty; another is set inside a computer system, where you blast alien viruses which appear as mechanized bugs, ships and other weapons. This level alone is worth the price of admission and seems perfectly suited to the type of 3D-rendered graphics being used.

So there you have it. Just strap yourself in, limber up your mouse-clicking finger, and blast away. You may find the gameplay gets a bit monotonous, but a wide assortment of unusual foes and excellent graphics keep things interesting — if you can get through them all, that is. Even on the beginner level, you won't find it easy.

—Joseph Novicki



One of the best-looking missions takes place inside this computer system. It contains the strangest "bugs" you'll ever see.

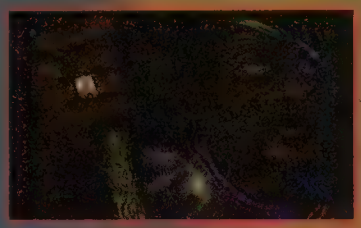
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

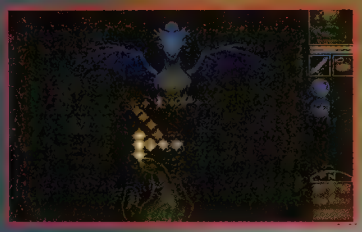
82%

HIGHS: The graphics and animation are as good as they get.

LOWS: It's a tough game, and it could have used a bit more variety.

BOTTOM LINE: The graphics and story elements help raise an otherwise monotonous shooter into an absorbing tale of adventure.









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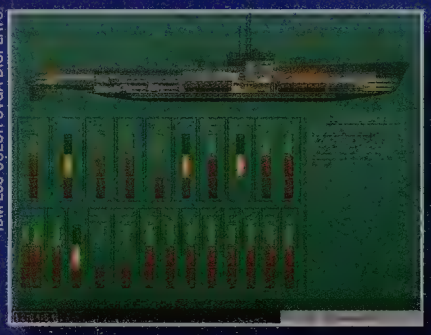
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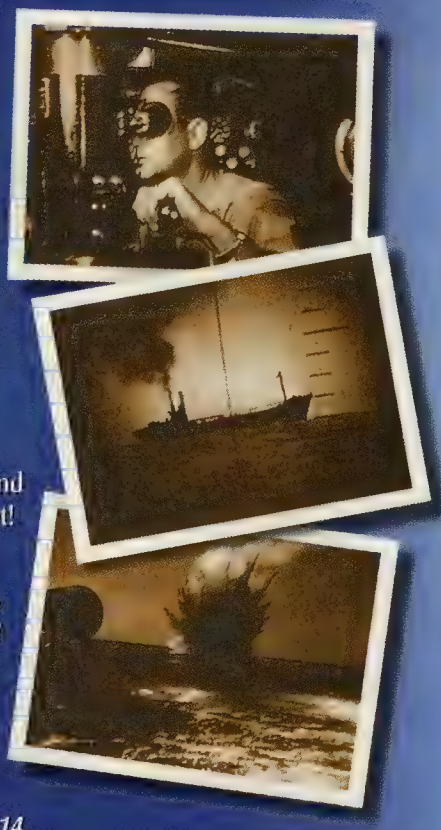
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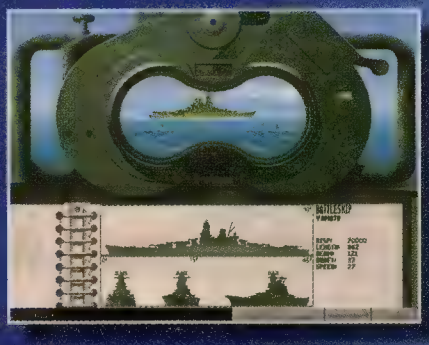
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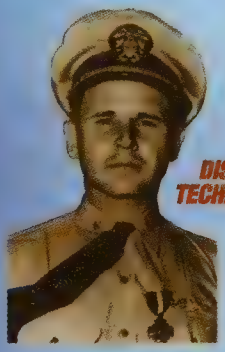


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Product Information Number 231

The Skins Game at Bighorn

Category: Sports Simulation

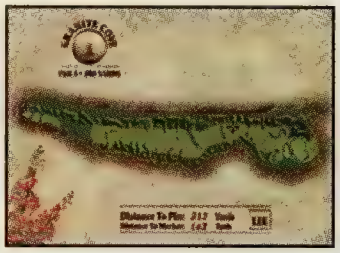
Developer: Griffin Fathom

Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 553-6678

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; 4MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or later; Mouse	8MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Interplay's first attempt at a golf simulation lands way out of bounds, with unrealistic gameplay and muddled graphics.



Overhead views of every hole help you plan your shots.



The Skins Game doesn't take much skill; once you're in this close to the green, you're practically assured of making every putt.

Unfortunately, some of the best intentions and ideas end up being poorly executed. That sad fact certainly applies to *The Skins Game at Bighorn*. This may be the worst golf simulation I've ever seen, and I've played some real dogs.

For starters, the photo-based graphics of *Skins* are bland and muddled. But the problem isn't so much in the graphics themselves; it's in the perspectives and the gameplay, and the dodgy way both are handled. *The Skins Game* is fairly fast to play, since there are very few screen redraws, but most of the course looks pretty much the same. After you take a shot, the view switches to the landing area, where you see the ball roll into view. Your golfer appears, and you're ready for the next shot. But as you progress to the hole, you never get the sense of being on an actual course.

The interface for *The Skins Game* will be familiar to anyone who has played computer golf. The golfer's swing is shown as an arc on the menu bar; you click once to start the swing, then click again to strike the ball. This is pretty standard for golf sims, and it works well enough, but unlike other games that require you to learn the subtleties of teeing off, or coming out of the rough, *The Skins Game* is far too forgiving. Take a horrible swing — hook or slice — and you're still likely to find yourself in the fairway. The shots all look pretty much the same, whether you're hitting with a driver or a short iron. Drives fly incredibly high, but then so do nine-iron shots.

Putting is even more lame — and even more absurdly easy. For long putts, you get the same forward perspective you had from the tee or fairway, but there's no sense of break on the green. Sure, you've got the targeting icon that tells you the putt breaks to the left, but you have no idea just by looking at the green. For short putts, you work from a side perspective, with the golfer on the left. There's even less sense of being there in this view; it looks basically the same every time. Again, there's no break to read, except what the targeting tool tells you. It doesn't matter, though. Nearly all the putts roll straight into the hole.



The controls when teeing off are easy to manage, but even if you hook or slice, you probably won't see the rough.

How easy is *The Skins Game*? Far too easy to be fun. I shot a 62 in my first round, giving the game more of the feel of an arcade game rather than a simulation. You might let your children play around with it as sort of an introduction to golf, but you'd probably want to move them on to a qualify golf sim pretty quickly, so they won't be turned off of the sport entirely.

The Skins Game has precious few good points, but here goes: This is a Windows game, so you can waste time at work without exiting to DOS. Because of the limited screen redraws, you can get through a round pretty quickly. Sound effects are not bad. The "skins" format might be fun for a party game. And that's about it.

There's a handful of excellent golf sims on the market, including *PGA Tour '96* (reviewed in this issue), *Links 386 Pro*, and *Microsoft Golf*. Against that competition, *The Skins Game* just doesn't make the cut. Even if you don't have the hardware to run one of the newer sims, you'll have more fun with the older versions of the Links or Jack Nicklaus sims than with *The Skins Game*.

—*Lee Buchanan*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

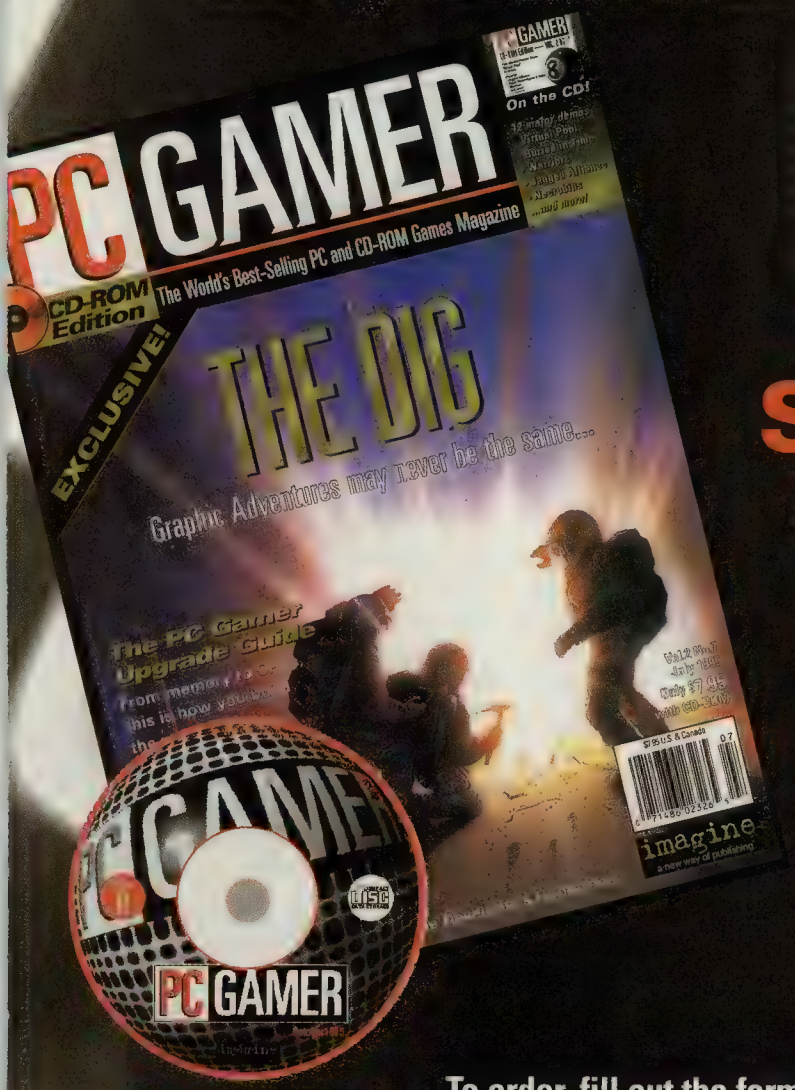
45%

HIGHS: Simple interface; decent sound effects.

LOWS: Limited perspectives; incredibly easy to shoot low scores.

BOTTOM LINE: Unless you demand unrealistic scores from your golf games, don't bother with *The Skins Game*.

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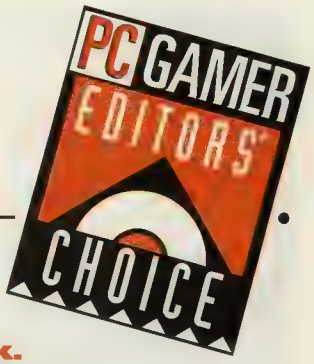


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Product Information Number 232

NHL '96



Category: Hockey Simulation

Developer: Electronic Arts

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; 512K SVGA video card with VESA compatible driver	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Gamepad

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

A major overhaul gives EA's NHL series gorgeous graphics and a great view of the rink.

Take a look at Electronic Arts' other sports offerings in this month's issue — *FIFA Soccer '96* and *PGA Tour '96* — and you'll see that 1995 is going to go out with a bang for sports fans. Both of those titles have either undergone major revisions to bring us games that are fun to play, but accurate enough to satisfy fans who demand attention to realism.

EA has lavished the same attention on their popular NHL series of hockey simulations, ending up with their finest hockey game to date. *NHL '96* sports a brand-new look (dropping the Sega-inspired graphics used in its two predecessors), and has incorporated the Virtual Stadium technology used in *FIFA Soccer '96*. This technology gives the player a choice of 11 "camera" angles that can put you right in the thick of things with a view of the rink at eye-level (head-cam) or give the game a real broadcast-quality feel (press-cam or skybox).

While most of these views aren't very useful for actually playing hockey — the puck becomes hard to follow in many of them, players get lost on the edges of the screen — the variety means you'll find more than a couple of views that are even better than the traditional top-down perspective. As a boon to fans who find it awkward to spend two periods skating downscreen in away games, you even have the option of reversing the perspective so you're always facing the direction you're most comfortable with.



Not only is this view of the ice the best yet, you can reverse the angles so you're always at a home-court advantage.

Once you've settled in with your favorite view, you'll find the graphics on the rink itself have changed for the better as well. Players are reflected in the ice, corporate advertisements pepper the boards, and the jersey colors and logos are dead-on accurate. And if your PC has the horsepower to use NHL's high resolution mode, you'll find it's the next best thing to having front row seats at the Garden.

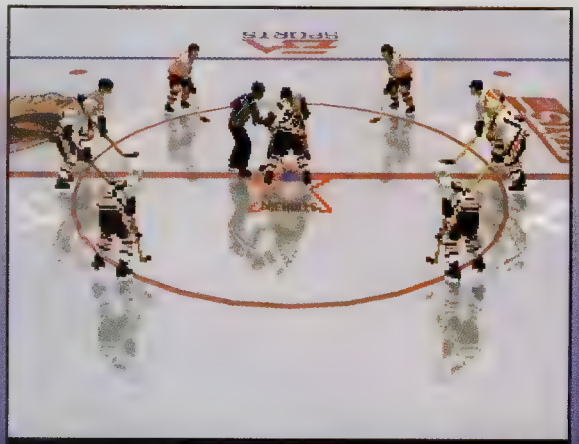
While most of the underlying elements aren't anything new to fans of the previous games — hands-on action, deep statistical data, league management, playoffs and season play — *NHL '96* is much more than last year's offering with a



All of the stats from the NHL are included in *NHL '96*, and the logical interface makes finding what you want to know a simple affair.



Even at standard VGA resolution, *NHL '96* is one of the best-looking hockey games ever to grace the PC...



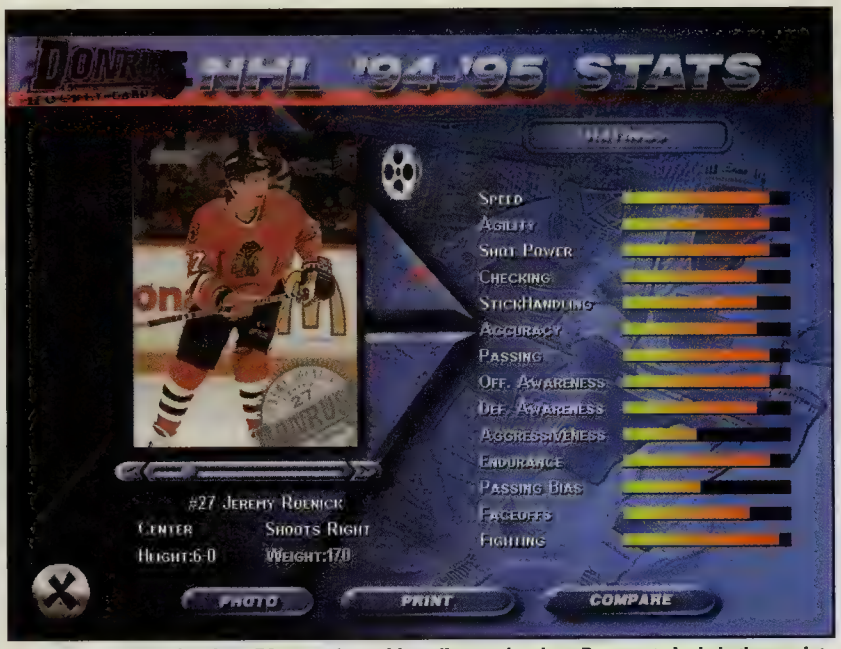
...and if you've got the horsepower to run it in high resolution, you'll be treated to crisp images like these.



Though it's a controversial move, fighting returns to *NHL '96* in a big way. Now you can duke it out against the biggest names in hockey, and maybe rearrange Eric Lindros' face.

The fights are back!

One of the complaints of EA's previous NHL games was the absence of what many feel is an intrinsic part of hockey — the fights. But it's a little-known fact that it wasn't EA's decision to ban the brawls. The governing body of North American hockey — the NHL — has approval over how it and the teams, players, owners, logos, etc. are represented in any product bearing their endorsement. Since the NHL has been trying to change the public's opinion of hockey as a rough-and-tumble sport to one that's a little more wholesome, fights have been carefully removed from products bearing NHL licenses. But thanks to the dogged determination of EA's Canadian design team, you'll find that *NHL '96* brings you all the punishing blows you'd expect to see at a real-life game.



As a bonus to hockey fans, EA teamed up with trading card makers Donruss to include these printable pictures in the player rosters.

pretty facelift. The gameplay against the computer has been carefully massaged into a more realistic representation of hockey, and it's a lot tougher than previous games. Gone are the days when you could skate up to the opposing teams' goal and slap two or three one-timers between the posts each period, or those unbelievable moments when the defending goalie would pump one in for you. None of that happens here.

In *NHL '96*, it's a rare occurrence if you score above 3 or 4 points in a game, and these are often very hard-won, with the opposing team nipping at your heels the entire way. You end up taking far more shots on goal from the blue-line or center ice, just hoping the law of averages kicks in and lets a puck slip through.

While this new NHL is a much tougher game, the AI for the computer-controlled players on both sides has been improved, giving you better scoring chances by putting your players in the right places. If you let them do their own thing, the computer controlled defensemen end up guarding the right spots to stop hard drives. And when you're on the offense, the forwards arrange themselves in proper formation for one-timers, or slip into the crease to pick up those ever-important rebound shots. This may sound like a given for a sports simulation, but does anyone remember *Brett Hull 95*?

If the computer AI is getting a little too tough, and you need a little friendly competition to see you through the day,



The head-cam view is great for checking out the action from a player's perspective, but you'll have a hard time following the puck.

NHL also includes a modem option you can use to dial up your friends for a little head-to-head action. And with the new Gravis GrIP adapter and controllers, you'll be able to get as many as four players into the act on a single PC (two players on each team) for the ultimate in hockey play.

After playing the better part of a season in *NHL '96*, I have to say that this is, without a doubt, the best hockey title out right now. The graphics are great, the action is fierce, and the depth of the stats are a hockey fan's dream. If you love the sport, this is a definite must-have.

—Todd Vaughn



Some of the camera angles aren't the best for controlling your players; this sky-box view proves a little too unwieldy for accurate offense or defense.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Knockout graphics, thrilling sound effects, modem options and the best hockey action around.

LOWS: Some camera angles don't give the optimum view of the rink; steep system requirements.

BOTTOM LINE: If you love hockey or sports games in general, be sure and add this one to your collection.



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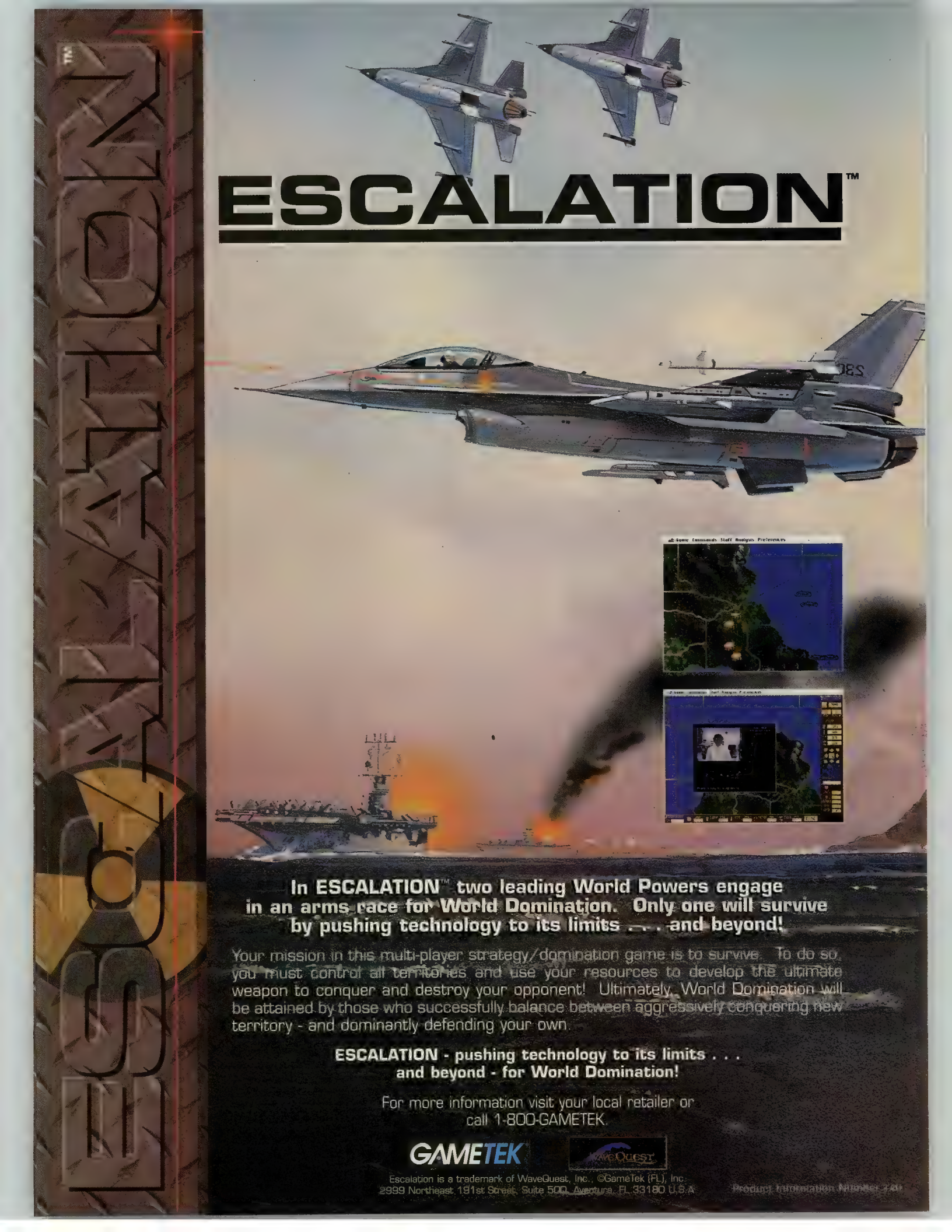
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Product Information Number 140

Dust: A Tale of the Wired West

Category: Adventure Game

Developer: Dream Factory

Publisher: Cyberflix, Inc. 4 Market Square, Knoxville, TN 37902 (615) 546-7846

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or later; SVGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

Forget about dodging bullets; in the Wired West, you're more likely to talk yourself to death before any shots are fired.

Dust takes you back to a mythical time when outlaws ruled small towns, and if you didn't have a six-shooter strapped to your hip, you weren't worth dealing with, much less shooting.

The game opens with an encounter between your character, The Stranger, and a ruthless outlaw known only as The Kid. When The Kid attempts to cheat your character in a card game, you nail his hand to the table with a knife. Naturally, this gets The Kid a little hot under the collar.

Barely escaping The Kid's vengeance that night, you end up wandering the desert with only five dollars to your name, and — most importantly — without a gun. You take control when The Stranger reaches the cozy, if dilapidated, town of Diamondback. It's your job to explore the town, meet its inhabitants, and, of course, solve its problems while avoiding death at the hands of The Kid.

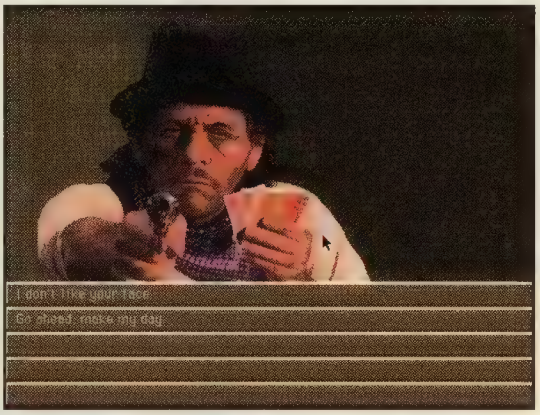
You spend most of your time in *Dust* talking to the people who live in Diamondback. Using branching conversation trees, you wade through your choices, trying to pick the question or statement that best fits the situation. Standard graphic adventure fare, but what's remarkable is that the characters actually remember your previous encounters, and they react accordingly later in the game — even to the point of telling other characters what you've been up to. For example, if you help someone out, later in the game that character's friend may supply you with the information or item you need. In the same situation, insulting one character may estrange you from several others.

To save room for the story and voice recordings, Cyberflix chose to forego full-motion video footage in favor of still pictures of the characters, animated only around key facial features (smiles, raised eyebrows, etc.) and the disembodied arms that occasionally pop up in a parody of body language. This wasn't a terrible decision, since the lack of video means there's room for more important elements, like a deeper story. But *Dust* still suffers from bad voice acting, which ranges from mediocre to downright awful, making most encounters almost painful.

A point in *Dust*'s favor is the realism of the setting. You can explore the town at your leisure, reading posters on the walls of buildings, and discovering a complex history behind its origins. Each building is logically placed in the town, and although it is a very small place, there's a lot going on. When you're not talking to them, the townspeople wander around on their own little errands, so you won't find the same character in the same place every time. Cyberflix did a good job of creating a town where you are a visitor, and not the sole reason for the existence of the entire world.

With its simple interface and complex character interaction, this is a fun game for people who enjoy lots of dialogue trees in their adventures, and realistic purposes for finding certain items. But be warned — there's a *lot* of dialogue, which gives the game a slow and steady pace. If you're looking for something with more immediate gratification, *Dust* probably won't hold your interest for long.

—Michael Wolf



Buckboard Pete is one of the fellers you have the honor of playing poker with. Don't cheat him ... he likes to use his gun.



Miss Oona Canute is the proud owner of the town's only saloon — the Hard Drive.



Welcome to Diamondback. It's full of some of the roughest individuals in the West, so you're sure to find plenty to keep you busy.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

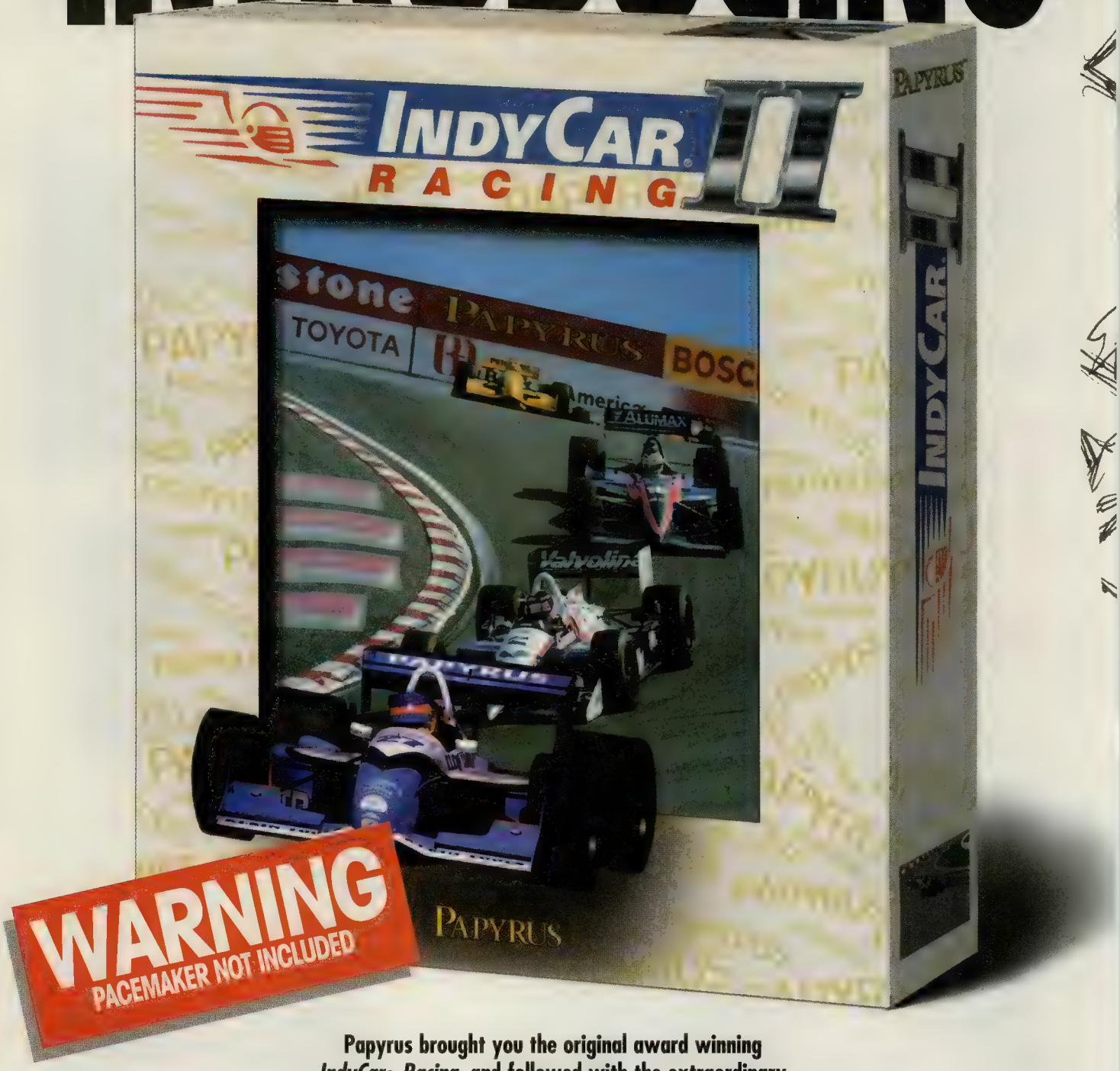
68%

HIGHS: Realistic 3D environment; highly interactive characters; intuitive interface.

LOWS: *Lots* of dialogue trees; slow story line; and bad voice acting.

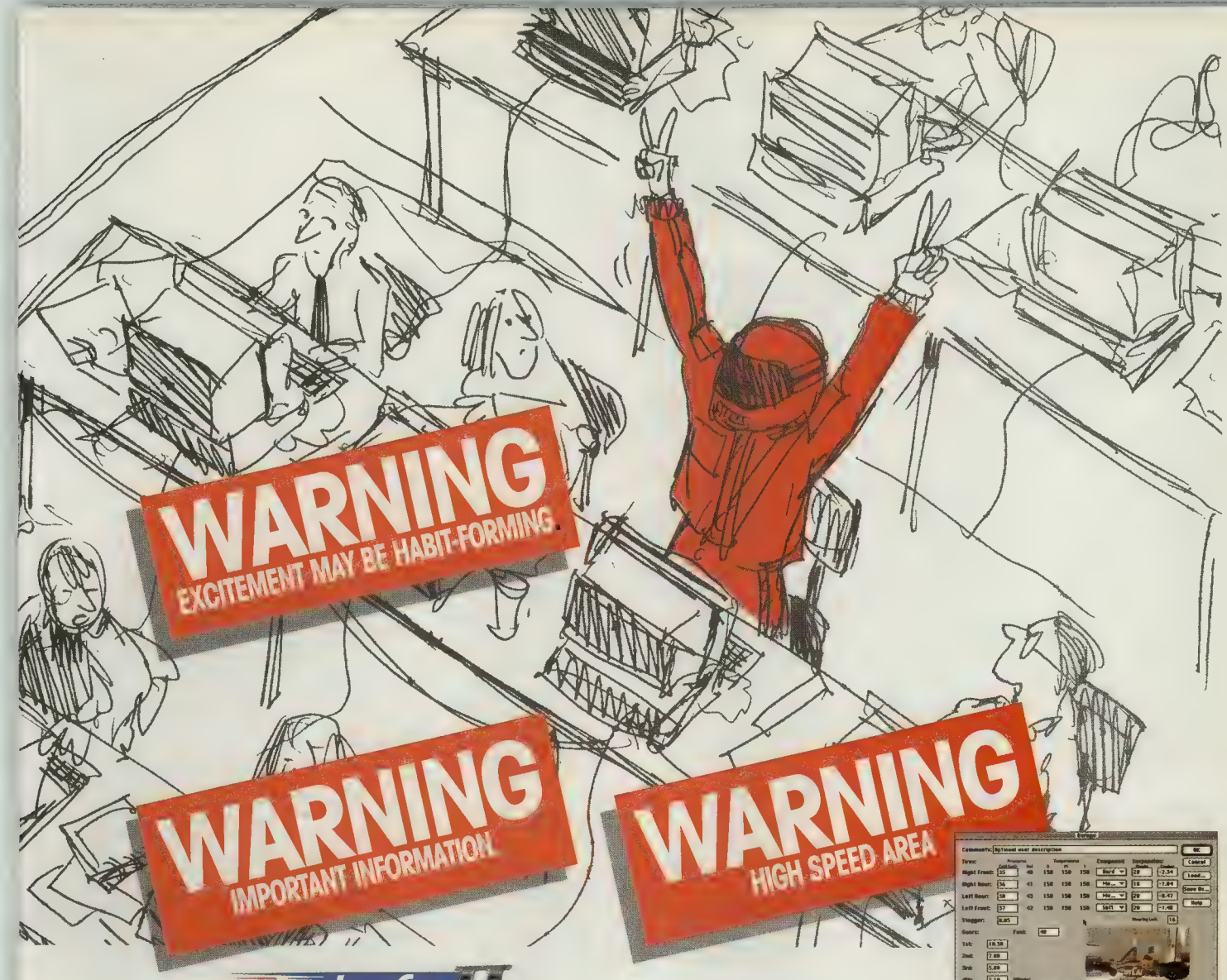
BOTTOM LINE: If you're in the mood for a conversation with your computer, check it out. Otherwise, you'll probably get bored rather quickly.

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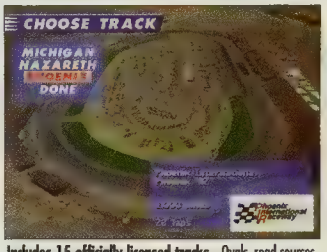
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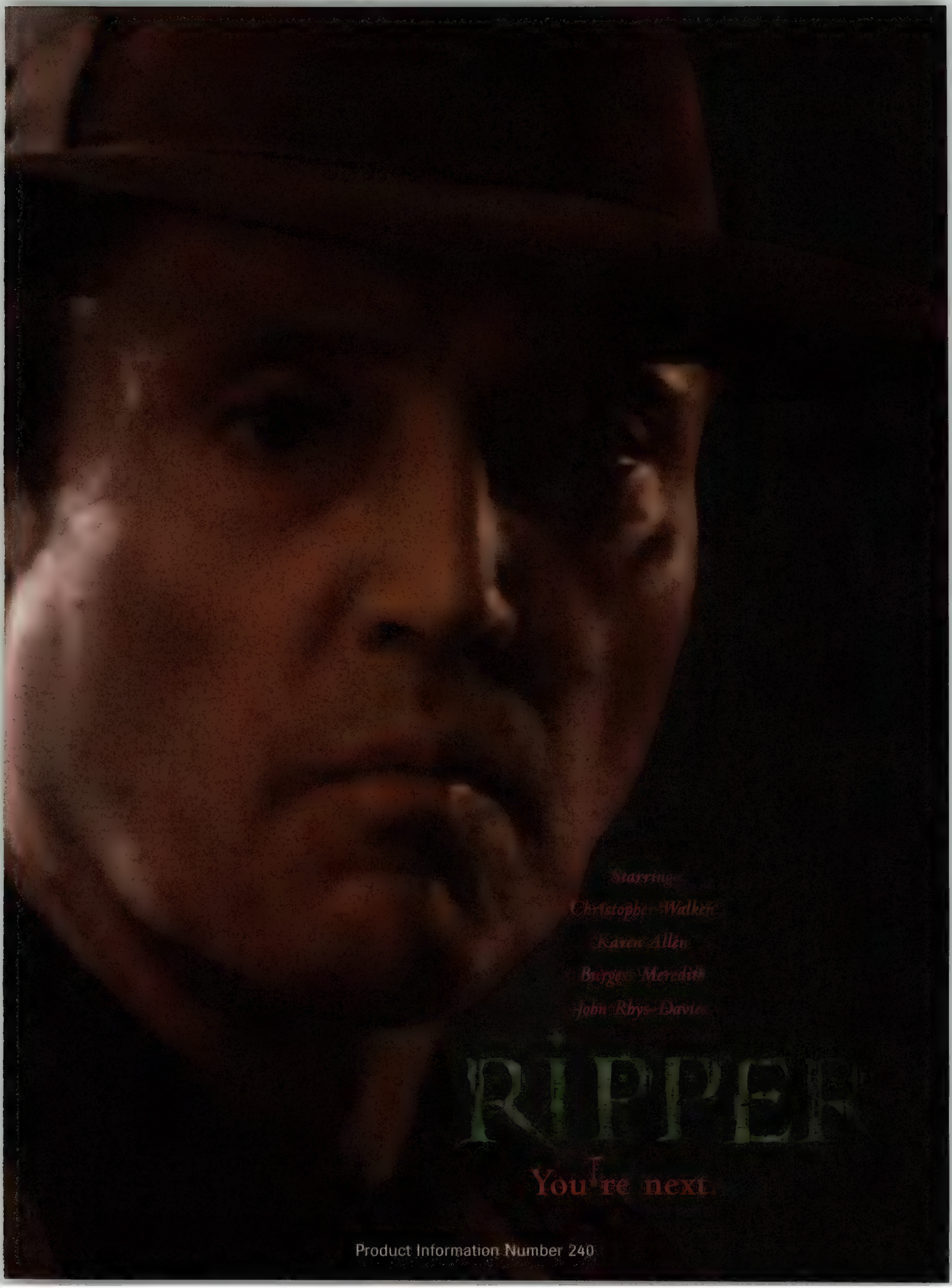


Vince Magnotta

A veteran police detective operating on the fringes of the law, Detective Vince Magnotta leads the Ripper investigation and spars with Quinlan, the player's character. With a deadly temper and a secretive past, Magnotta becomes a suspect in the Ripper killings.

TAKE 2

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Product Information Number 240

HARLAN ELLISON

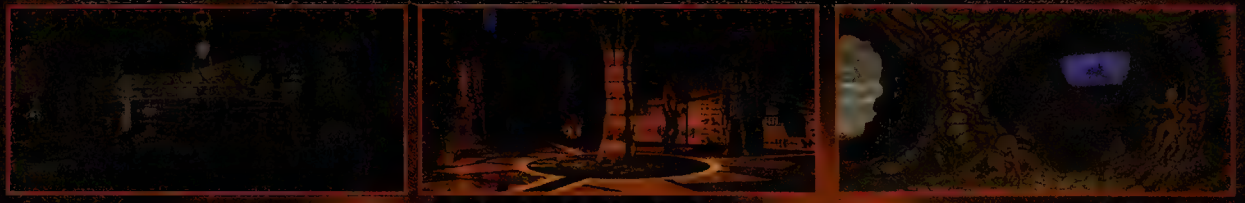
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Product Information Number 169

3-D Ultra Pinball for Windows

Category: Pinball Simulation

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, P.O. Box 3404, Salinas, CA 93912 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; SVGA	486/66; Windows 95; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $39.95

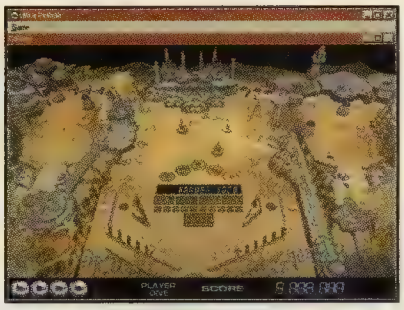
3-D Ultra Pinball is Sierra's first foray into the world of computerized pinball since *Take a Break Pinball*, and it's a surprisingly good one.

Unlike 21st Century's *Pinball Illusions* or Epic MegaGames' *Epic Pinball*, Sierra's game isn't a pinball simulation dedicated to reproducing the exacting details of the great coin-op dinosaurs. Instead, *3-D Ultra Pinball* mixes the fun of pinball with some unique features that could only be found in a computer game.

Using themes from their sci-fi strategy game *Outpost*, Sierra has created three monster tables that take up the entire screen, giving you plenty to look at and shoot at. Instead of a limited playing area with all of the bumpers, targets and chutes aligned along a traditional vertical rectangle, *3-D Ultra Pinball* has mini-tables on either side of the main table (complete with flippers), which give you access to special power-ups, bonuses, and animations.

These animations, which range from explosions to gliders flying around the screen, give *Ultra Pinball* more bells and whistles than you could ever get on a real-life pinball table. But it's more than just eye-candy; reach a certain stage or acquire a bonus in the game, and you'll warp to smaller tables that pop up as separate games of their own.

The gameplay itself is a little more forgiving than most computer pinball games, which is both a plus and a minus. If you're not the world's biggest pinball freak, you'll enjoy being able to keep a single ball going for more than a few seconds, but if you want realistic ball movement, you'll probably be frustrated by the less-than-accurate physics.



Get into the side tables off of the main table in *3-D Ultra Pinball* to enable some of the special animations, bonuses, and power ups.

Overall, *3-D Ultra Pinball* is just simple arcade entertainment. You've seen it done many times before, but there's enough new here to make it a cut above most pinball games. You won't need to know anything extra to play it, but the extras it provides are worth looking into.

—Todd Vaughn

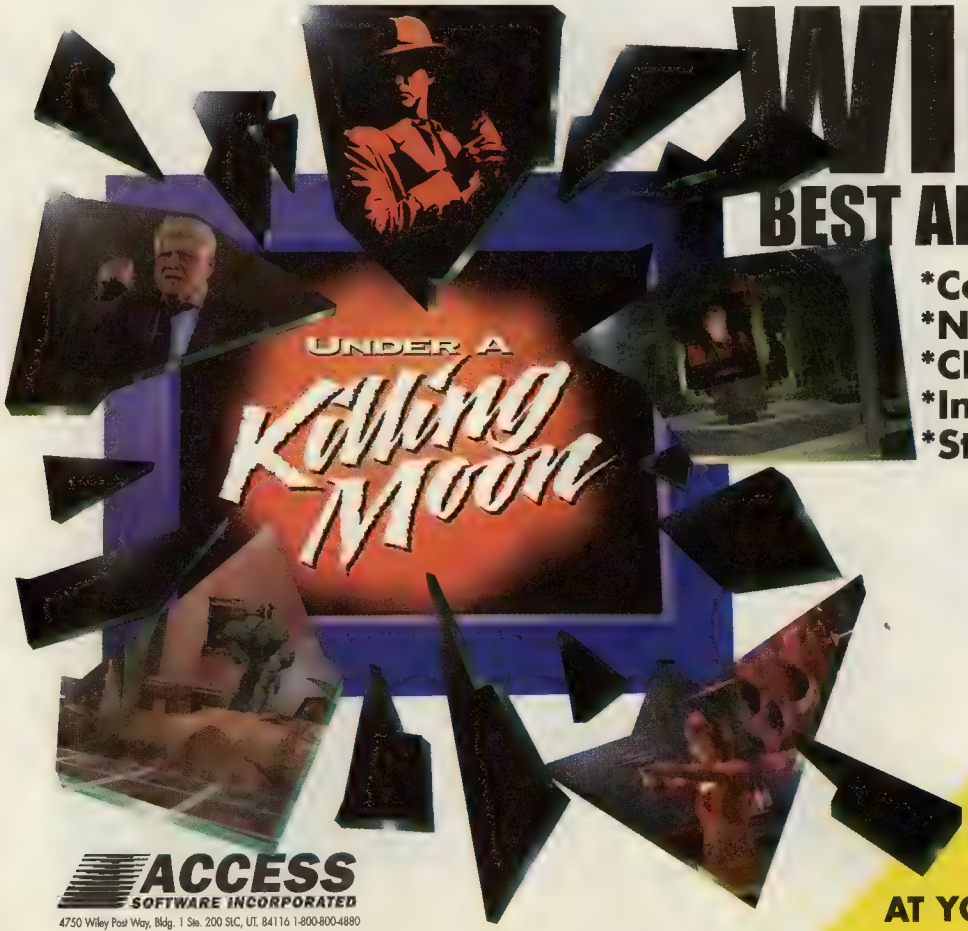
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Great graphics; innovative table design gives more bang for the buck.

LOWS: *3-D Ultra Pinball*'s physics model may be too forgiving for pinball purists.

BOTTOM LINE: A fun alternative to traditional pinball simulations, and a great way to spend an afternoon.



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Product Information Number 84

Capitalism

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Business Simulation

Developer: Enlight Software

Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386DX/33; 4MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

This all-encompassing business sim is good enough to make a convert out of Karl Marx himself.

I'll play a computer simulation of just about anything. If it's well done, involved, and the least bit interesting, I'll give it a try. That's led me to jump into sims that might not get a lot of attention. You'll find a few gems that way, like *Capitalism*, a business simulation from Interactive Magic.

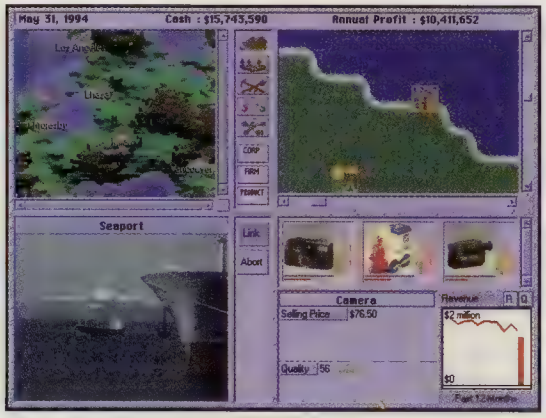
I know, I know. A biz sim? Fun? Well, don't knock it 'til you've tried it. *Capitalism* can be fun, and I'm not ashamed to say it. Most folks who've encountered business sims feel like they're stuck in an Intro to Marketing class — and this one's good enough that it could be an excellent teaching tool — but if you're willing to give it a chance, you just might get a kick out of *Capitalism*.

This sim is deep, multi-faceted, and challenging. There's a bit of a learning curve, especially if you aren't familiar with the economic principles at work. But once you get the hang of it, this sim is a business blast.

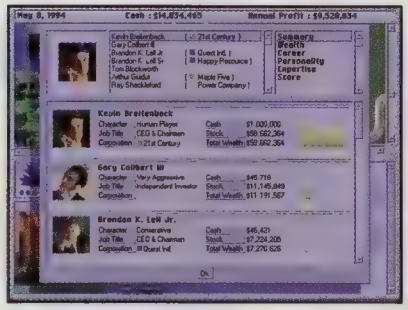
Capitalism gives you a wide world of business and industry with which to build your empire. Manufacturing, raw materials production, farming, research and development, advertising, and retailing are all modeled in depth. You can manufacture your own products and materials, import them, or purchase them from a competitor.



Don't know beans about farming? The handy dandy farmer's guide can help, showing you what to plant and where to plant it.



Until you can produce your own goods to sell at retail, you'll have to buy them. Seaports are a good source for imported products, but you can't count on a steady supply.



There's a wealth of data available about you and your computer-controlled rivals. Use this information to plot your strategy and plot hostile takeovers.

Such a diverse mix of tools gives the players plenty of options for clawing their way to the top. You can concentrate on retailing, farming, or manufacturing, or diversify with any combination of those economic segments. Or you can sit back, light a cigar, and play the stock market, buying and selling your rivals' stock, maybe even finish off the day with a satisfying hostile takeover. You can pursue all these strategies, or only one of them. That flexibility is the beauty of *Capitalism*.

Your competitors are ruthless, wily, and driven — much like yourself. You can change the competition's ability, of course, and at the highest level, these guys and gals are tough to beat. They don't waste any time, either. Take a bathroom break without pausing this sim, and they'll rip your lungs out.

There's an interesting range of scenarios to force you to adopt different strategies. Maybe you're out to topple The Beverage King, the guy who controls a monopoly on the beer industry. Or you're a 25-year-old smart-aleck with an MBA, bankrolled by the family to build an empire in 10 years. Or you're charged with diversifying the operations of a struggling farm co-op. The scenarios have various objectives and different products, and they require different strategies. The many components of *Capitalism* make these scenarios work. Turn off the stock market, and limit the player to only two or three products, and you've still got an interesting game.

This sim requires some work to get into, but there's an outstanding tutorial to walk you through all the fundamentals. These eight instructional games cover everything from retailing to playing the stock market. After you work through a tutorial, you can continue to play the game, and you'll be playing the same game when you begin the next tutorial. When you've finished all eight tutorials, you're already well into your first career as an entrepreneur.

Capitalism isn't for everyone. It's a fairly sophisticated business simulation, a detailed re-creation of production, marketing and retailing. If that sounds *unbearably* boring, then you should probably stick to *Doom*. But if you'd like to try your luck at becoming a business tycoon, here's your chance to find out if you've got what it takes.

—Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Broad and deep business simulation, helped along by an excellent tutorial.

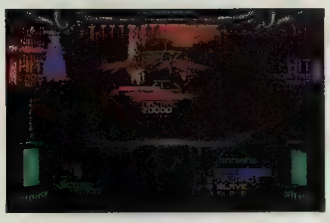
LOWS: Too complex for some gamers; too tedious for others.

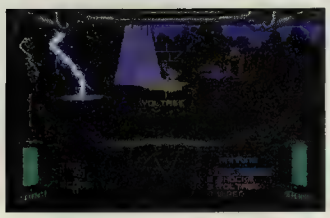
BOTTOM LINE: If you're the least bit interested in the subject, give this one a try.

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Product Information Number 246

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VIACOM NEWMEDIA

Product Information Number 254

PC & MAC CD-ROM

PGA Tour '96

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Electronic Arts

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94403-7578 (800) 245-4525

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; SVGA; 512K video RAM; MSCDEX 2.21 or higher; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

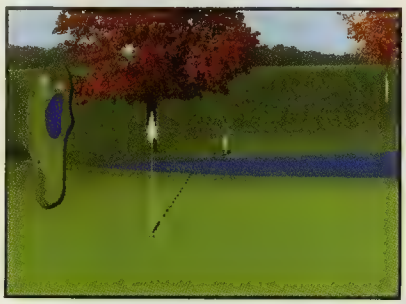
Electronic Arts' latest version of *PGA Tour* delivers the goods to unseat *Links 386 Pro*.

You're three shots back with three holes to play. You need three straight birdies to catch Davis Love and force a sudden-death playoff. This is high-stakes tournament golf — the big time. And *PGA Tour '96* puts you there, playing alongside 14 pros.

It looks like golf, it sounds like golf, and it feels like golf. The sounds are superb, the graphics are sumptuous, and the tournament play is thrilling. You couldn't ask for a finer golf simulation.

This golf sim has been around a while, and it gets better with each new version. New to this version are fly-bys of each hole and a live overhead view. Those are welcome additions, but the real upgrade here is the game's performance and the level of difficulty.

From the first version of *PGA Tour*, my only serious complaint about this series has been its difficulty, or lack of it. Now, I'm not one of those dedicated players who routinely shoot sub-60 rounds in *Links*, but after a few rounds in the first two versions of *PGA Tour*, I was able to consistently ping shots right off the flag stick. None of that here, and I've played dozens of rounds. *PGA Tour* has gone from child's play to a challenging simulation of golf.



You da man! Instant replay lets you savor your best shots. Most aspects of the game are satisfyingly difficult, but chipping is just too easy.

There are three skill levels, marked by increasingly faster swings and smaller hitting zones. You can hit the ball with almost unerring accuracy at the easier settings, but the shot distances are much shorter. At the Amateur setting, the hitting zone is fat and the swing moves like molasses. Miss the sweet spot at the Pro level, and you're likely to take a detour into the woods. Accuracy requires precise timing, but that's the way it should be. This time out, *PGA Tour Golf* feels about right.

Chipping is still too easy, with chip-ins from the rough almost commonplace. But the tee shots are so demanding, you'll gladly take whatever you can get in the short game.

Screen redraws, a real weakness of *PGA Tour 486*, have been vastly improved in the new version. You still need a Pentium machine to run this game reasonably well, but enough hardware muscle will give you lightning-quick play.

The play-by-play commentary is cleverly done and on target. The announcer, speaking in an appropriately hushed tone, provides the usual commentary and tips on which way the putt will break. Don't listen to him, though, because he's often wrong about the putt. Still, the audio's a nice touch. Other sound effects add a great deal of atmosphere to the game, from the crowd's roars and groans to the sound of the crashing surf at Spyglass Hill.

Any golf sim has to be measured against *Links*, the reigning — and for a long time, the unchallenged — champion. The last version of *PGA* closed the gap with *Links 386 Pro*. For my money, the new generation of *PGA* has grabbed the lead. *Links* probably still looks a shade better, but *PGA* offers so many more features that you'll quickly forget any slight graphics edge. Access is working on the next generation of *Links*, and they'd be wise to look at *PGA* as their main competition.

The only thing lacking here is more courses. You get Avenel and Spyglass Hill, and Electronic Arts is promising add-on courses. EA has promised other courses for other versions of the game, but they've seemed too busy upgrading the game to worry about giving players more courses. Here's hoping they follow through with the promise quickly this time.

Avenel has been included on every *PGA Tour* release, going back to the original game. Spyglass Hill is a welcome addition. This simple seaside course is a beauty, and a challenging test of your golfing skills. But those are the only courses.

That's about the only complaint I can muster against *PGA Tour '96*. We need more courses, and we need 'em fast.

—Lee Buchanan



***PGA Tour '96* is vastly improved from earlier versions. The graphics and perspectives, such as this reverse-angle view, have a definite television flair.**



You can tee off against 14 PGA pros. The selection screen provides some comments from the pro, as well as a short video.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Spectacular graphics, sound, gameplay. Good difficulty levels.

LOWS: You'll need a Pentium to overcome the slow load times. More courses would be a welcome addition.

BOTTOM LINE: If you love the game of golf, this is a duffer's delight.

INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

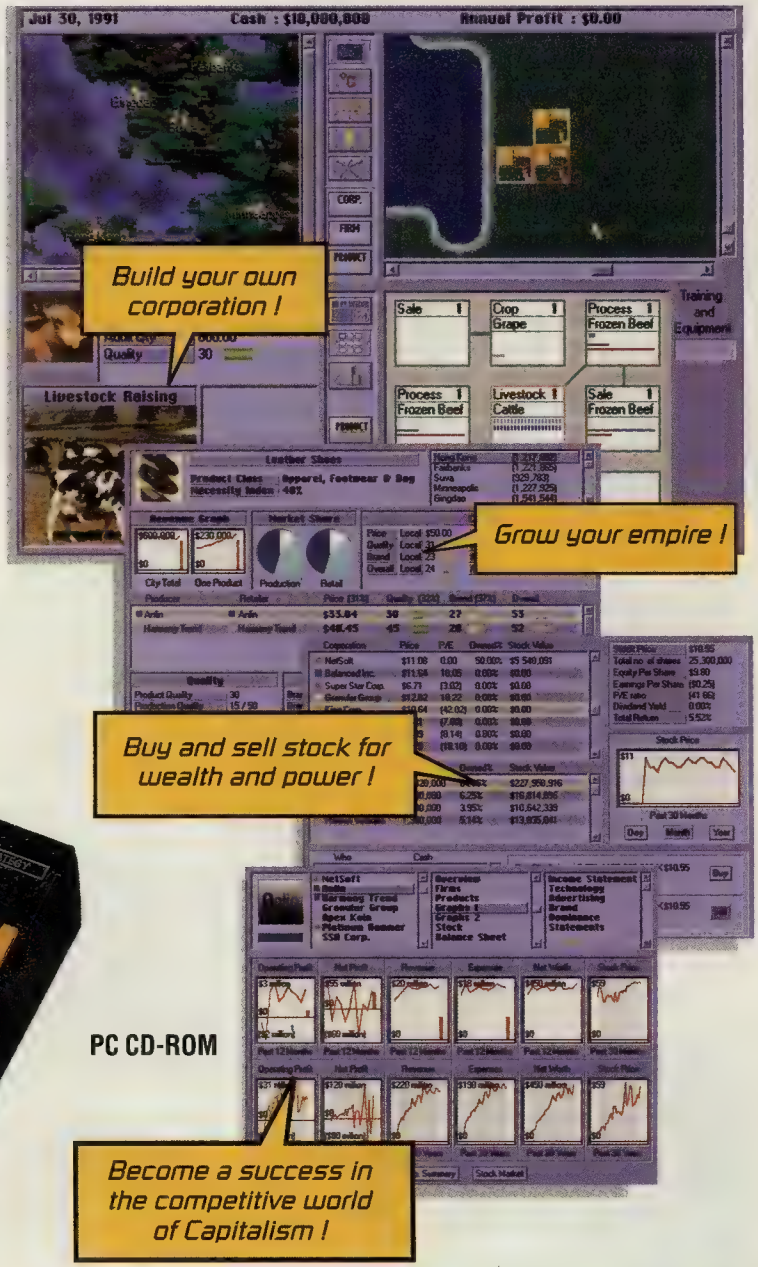
CAPITALISM

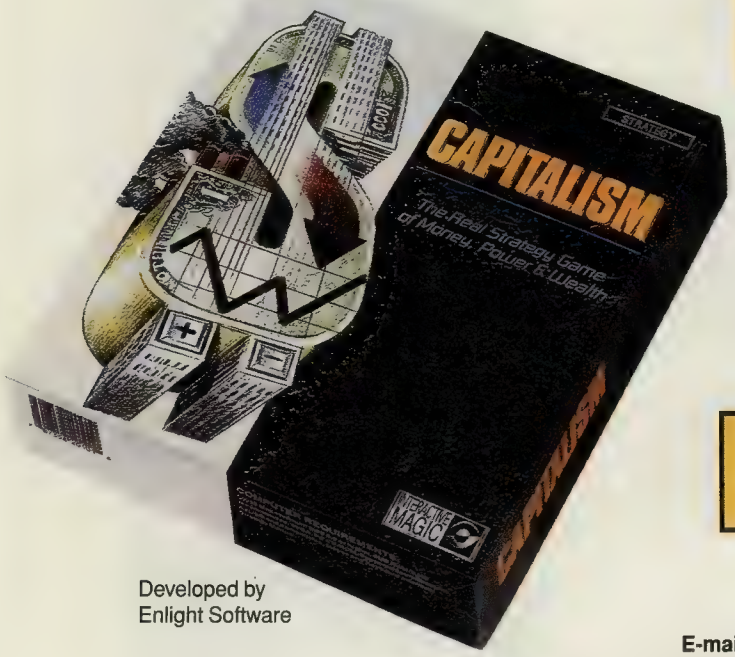
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Product Information Number 149

Solitaire Deluxe for Windows

Category: Card game

Developer: Interplay

Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 553-6678

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 386/33; Windows 3.1; 4MB RAM; Mouse	486/33; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $29.95

If the multimedia age is overwhelming you, if the violence in first-person shooters is making you sick, or if the complexity of RPGs and sims is making you think too much, then return to gaming's simpler times with Interplay's *Solitaire Deluxe for Windows*.

You won't find anything too tough to handle here. Just 24 variations on classic solitaire that let you choose the pace you want. Traditional sequence-forming games like Klondike (the one solitaire game *everybody* knows), Upside-down Pyramid, Three Shuffles and a Draw, and Spider; pair-matching games like Pyramid, Take Fourteen, and Monte Carlo; and some fun-yet-strange games like Poker Solitaire, Calculation, and Accordion, are just a handful of the challenges that lie ahead.

The best part of trying all these games on a computer is not having to deal the cards yourself. Dealing out a few cards for Klondike is OK, but when you think of dealing 16 piles of three cards each for Three Shuffles and a Draw, you start to really appreciate the ease of using *Solitaire Deluxe*.

The only "hard" thing you'll have to do in *Solitaire Deluxe* is pick the designs for your cards and the playing board. For the cards, you can choose from 18 designs, including a Mayan puzzle design, two decks based on a fireworks theme, and the Interplay logo. For the playing board, you get 12 varied — mostly ugly — choices, and you can even import your own bitmap images.

Solitaire Deluxe will also keep score for you (in either traditional or challenge mode), let you play a tournament of five games picked by the computer or yourself, time your games, and let you play against your friends (that's right, multi-player solitaire — there's some irony here somewhere).



In Pyramid, you have to clear all the cards away by matching two cards that add up to 13.

You're not going to find any bells and whistles in this program, but then again, it's just solitaire and doesn't really need any dressing up. What more could you want besides a deck of cards, the background of your choice, and an easy-to-use interface? Pick it up just for the fun of it.

—Dean H. Renninger

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

75%

HIGHS: It's an easy-to-use adaptation of the classic card game.

LOWS: If you've never cared for solitaire, there's nothing here that'll change your mind.

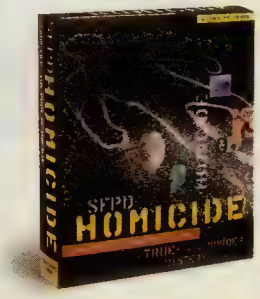
BOTTOM LINE: If you want to play a whole slew of variations on solitaire, this is for you.

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Product Information Number 142

The Riddle of Master Lu

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Adventure Game

Developer: Sanctuary Woods

Publisher: Sanctuary Woods, 1825 S. Grant Street, San Mateo, CA 94402 (800) 943-3664

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/25; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486/66; Supported sound card

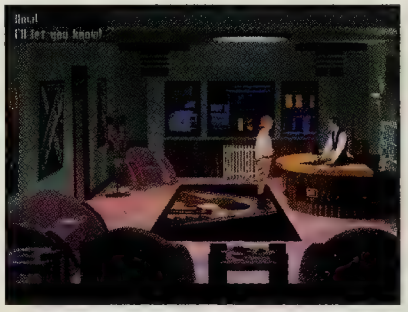
M.S.R.P.: $59.95

In one of the most impressive graphic adventures of the year, you walk a line between fact and fiction.

It's kind of hard to figure out just what makes a good graphic adventure. The plots of successful adventures have varied from the crazed antics of a cartoon rabbit and dog in *Sam and Max Hit the Road* to the rejuvenation of a magic kingdom in *Return to Zork*. Graphics are certainly important, but it's easy to see from games like *Day of the Tentacle* that even realistic visuals aren't necessary to create a hit.

In Sanctuary Woods' newest title, *Ripley's Believe it or Not!: The Riddle of Master Lu*, the developers have taken a classic pulp-style story, mixed it with some of the smoothest animation to grace the PC, and created a title that is not only entertaining, but has that extra something that makes a game into a classic.

When you hear the name "Ripley," you probably get an image of the Believe it or Not! books, cheap paperbacks filled with page after page of vegetables shaped like dead presidents, or men who've discovered they have the rare talent of balancing pianos on their heads.



The travel office will become your home away from home as you wander around the world trying to recover the Imperial seal.

But Sanctuary Woods may change what you think about the crown prince of the unusual. Playing out more like a new chapter in the life of Indiana Jones, *The Riddle of Master Lu* is fast-paced cliffhanger from start to finish.

Your story starts in Egypt in the year 1936, with a young Robert Ripley stumbling across the desert sands, trying to evade two thieves who seem ready to promote themselves to murderer status. When the pair finally catch up with Ripley, they are frightened off at the last minute by the sound of a mournful wailing that seems to rise up from an ancient statue.

Content to escape with Ripley's belongings, the thieves leave the battered adventurer to his fate. The idol turns out to be the legendary "speaking" Statue of Memnon, and is the first of many bizarre items you'll encounter in your quest.

After you find your way out of the desert sands, it's time to head back to Ripley's office in New York City. Here too, villains have been at work. The game's challenges begin as you (Ripley) and your faithful female companion, Mei Chen, find your place of business ransacked. One of your partners is tied to a chair facing a highly poisonous cobra left behind by your unwanted visitors.

Survive this first puzzle, and you'll learn that the thieves were looking for the key to one of the world's greatest treasure troves, the tomb of the first Emperor of China. One of the items in the tomb, the Imperial Seal of the First Emperor, is said to give its owner almost limitless power. In order to keep this valuable relic out of the hands of killers and thugs, you must once again journey to the Orient and face the multitudes of dangers that await you there.

So far, the story is pretty much

MEET THE CAST...

ROBERT L. RIPLEY



The Ripley of *The Riddle of Master Lu* is young, adventurous, and can keep his cool in just about any situation. As Ripley, your driving goals are the recovery of the Imperial Seal, the collection of strange and unusual objects for the Odditorium Museum, and the safety of your loyal friends — not necessarily in that order. Keep in mind that Ripley is not a particularly physical hero; you'll do better thinking your way out of a problem than trying to force your way out.

MEI CHEN



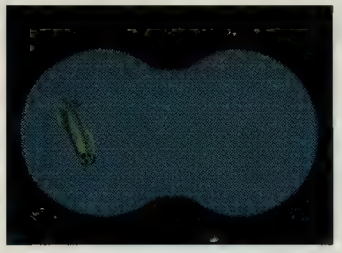
Your somewhat mysterious companion, Mei Chen, will accompany you on many of your travels around the globe. She is beautiful, intelligent, and very useful as a source of information and insight. Keep her nearby whenever possible.

FENG LI

Your most trusted business associate, Feng Li would rather die than let anything harm the oddities in the museum. Although he's not the most useful person in the world for clues, he will keep your business running smoothly in your absence, and will take care of the bothersome details involved in building new exhibits.



When you first enter your office, you find your partner trapped by a giant venomous snake. Move quickly, or you may lose more than just an exhibit.



Many of the exhibits in the Odditorium, like the copper tank, offer up their own bizarre animations.



This blank spot in Ripley's Odditorium Museum is just waiting for the next big crowd-pleasing artifact... it's time for Ripley to hit the road and find that intriguing attraction!



This old lady has something you need. If only you had something in common with her....

the same in basic theory as any of a thousand different adventure games: a bad man gets powerful thing and wants to rule the world, and only you have what it takes to get it back. What sets *Riddle* apart is its incredible attention to detail, using as much fact as possible in its story-telling, while adding enough fantasy to keep the game intriguing.

The first things you'll notice are the amazing locations that Ripley visits throughout the game. Although in many cases the names have been changed to protect the innocent, you get a Ripley's-eye view of Asia in the 1930s, from the severed heads of thieves in Peping to the frightening standing stones of Easter Island. Graphic detail is phenomenal throughout, representing both the strange and the commonplace with striking clarity.



The Hall of Classics obviously has something you need within, but this old fellow won't let you inside.



Looking at items in your inventory will bring up a highly detailed graphic, so you can get a better idea of what you're carrying. This cash will only take you so far.

Another thing that makes *Riddle*'s unbelievable tale so addicting and life-like is the intrusion of the everyday onto your journeys. Even though the famed adventurer always has time for a mission as important as this one, it's still of paramount importance that you manage to stay afloat on the business side as well. As the proprietor of a museum called the Odditorium, you must find as many strange and unusual objects as possible on your worldwide wanderings. If you don't send enough back home, the museum will go under, and so will the bankroll that allows you the luxury of further globetrotting.

This dependency on the bizarre can be a severe drawback at sometimes, adding an entirely new twist to an already difficult problem. When Ripley finds his partner about to be bitten by that cobra early in the game, you must figure out a way to capture the reptile without harming it, or you risk losing one of your biggest attractions.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about *Riddle* is how well it manages to combine full-motion video and digitized actors in such a playable game. Several key scenes are played out with full motion video that's some of the best I've seen in a game, and each of the animated characters moves around the screen without a hint of jerking or flicker.

The soundtrack is equally pleasing to the senses, adding to the realistic feel of the adventure with period music that never really gets old or noticeably repetitive.

In the end, *Riddle* may not offer enough variation from the common themes of graphic adventuring to bring over players who have traditionally avoided the genre, but fans of the point-and-click classics will find this game well worth its shelf price. By pulling the best features out of games that have come before and adding a few new twists all their own, Sanctuary Woods may just have stumbled on the secret formula for successful gaming ... Believe it or Not!

—Trent C. Ward

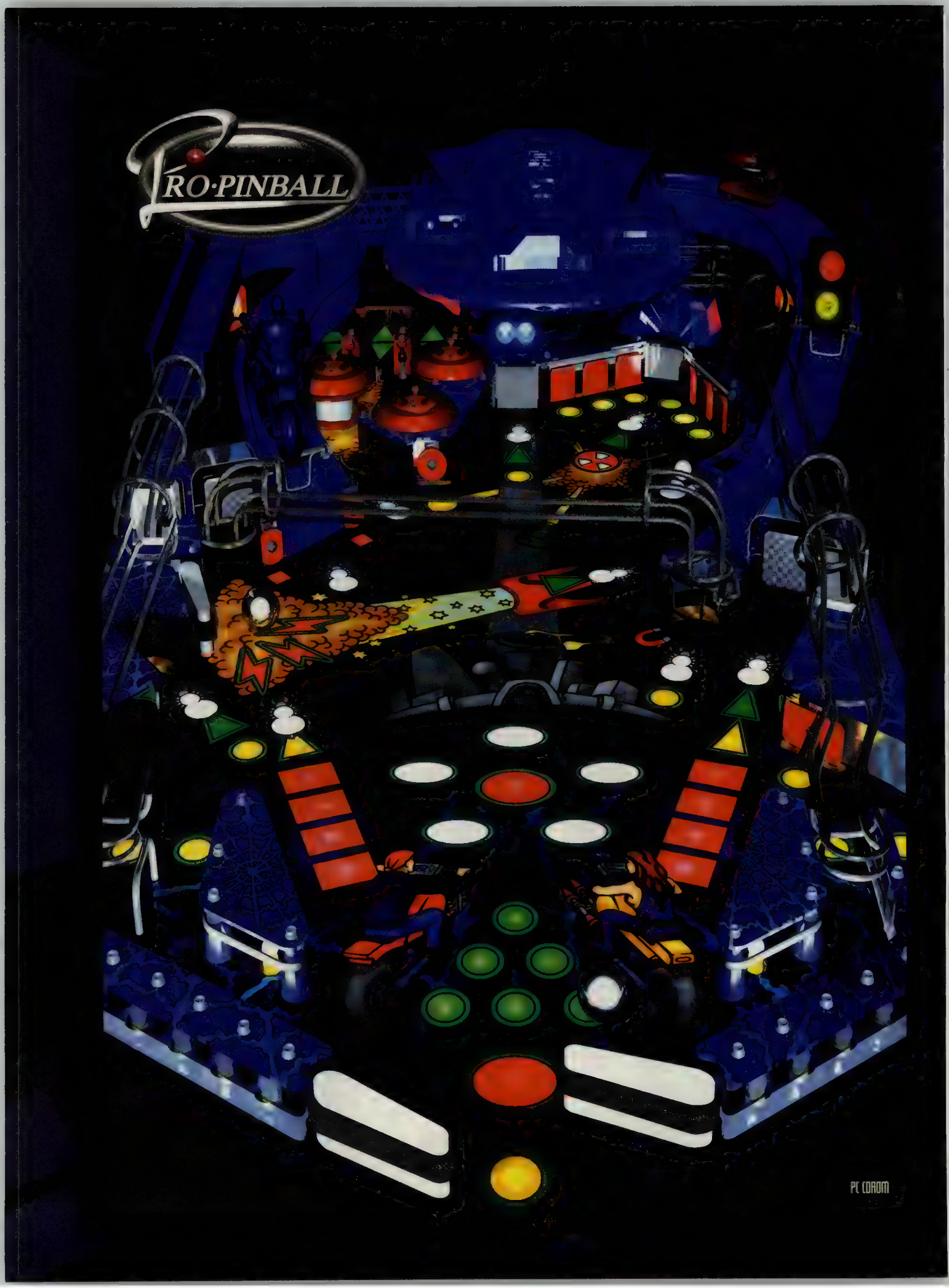
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

91%

HIGHS: Great graphics, great puzzles, and a fantastic story that most gamers will love to spend time with.

LOWS: No real deviation from standard graphic adventure format.

BOTTOM LINE: If you love graphic adventures, you'll find your heart's desire here.


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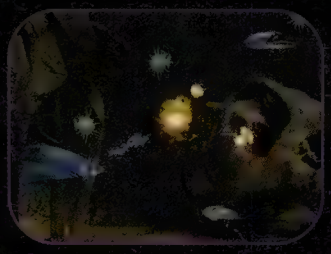
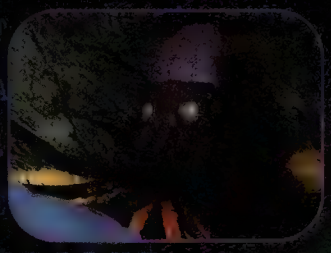
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Product Information Number 127

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Product Information Number 93

Empire II: The Art of War

Category: Wargame

Developer: White Wolf Productions, Inc.

Publisher: New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 899-5650

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 386; 4MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

Well, here it is: one of the most eagerly awaited wargames in recent years — and what a disappointment.

I hate having to write this review. *Nobody* was a more rabid fan of the original *Empire* than I was. It stayed on my hard drive for five years. I never got tired of it, and I spent so much company time playing it that I was eventually reprimanded by my supervisor.

But, to paraphrase the Oldsmobile commercial, "This is not your father's *Empire*." It isn't even *Empire* at all. But you've got to sympathize with the creators of the brilliant original, Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky: they had this terrific name-recognition, but they'd already milked that cow for all it was worth in *Empire Deluxe* (a sequel which, despite its graphic improvements and added features, lacked the bewitching, cut-throat intensity of the original).

So they've tried to have it both ways, capitalizing on the *Empire* legend, but using a subtitle in an attempt to indicate that this is *not* a new version of the addictive classic. You bet it isn't.

Empire 2: The Art of War is really two programs in the same box. The first consists of a set of preset battle scenarios you can jump right into and play. There is great variety here (and to the best of my knowledge, nobody's ever had scenarios with Blenheim, Arbela or Lepanto before), ranging from neolithic head-bashing to Buck Rogers sci-fi scenarios. Some of these are loads of fun.

But too many of them, alas, are dogs. Take the Battle of Antietam, for instance — the single bloodiest day of the Civil War, and it plays out in *ten turns*. The time-scale is grotesque. You cannot begin to suggest the scope, complexity, or ferocity of this battle in ten lousy turns. A cloud of lethargy, dense as cannon smoke, hangs over this scenario (ditto for Shiloh, by the way).

The lumpy time-scale also makes it impossible for you to rally demoralized troops — you either leave them on the field until they're wiped out, or they rout headlong to the rear. You cannot pull them out of line for a while, give them a breather and a pep-talk, then send them back into battle.

I can hear the arguments now: "But, Herr Trotter, the heart and soul of *Empire 2* is in its scenario builder, not in those tossed-off preset battles."

Granted. There has probably never been a more detailed, more flexible, and more powerful scenario builder published in a commercial product. *If* you can figure out how it works, that is.

The manual *desperately* needs a tutorial for this aspect of the program, but there isn't one — just page after page of opaque, jargon-laden prose as dense and graceless as those awful old SSI manuals from the 1980s (and the lack of an index just makes matters worse).



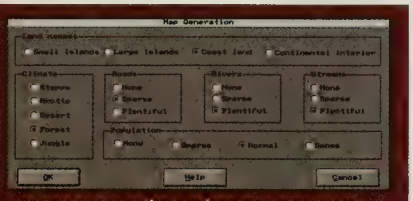
The Battle of Arbela, in 331 B.C., makes an interesting stand-alone game, and one that nobody's ever done before for the PC.



There are two ways to have battles: "sequential" (one side makes all its moves, then the other side goes) or "parallel" (both sides issue orders, then watch what happens); the former is easier, the latter more realistic.



Using a basic, but thoroughly adequate, paint program, you can create your own maps, of near-infinite variety...



...or you can use the random map generator, with its generalized parameters — it really does a good job, and can save you hours.

Let me put it another way: it took me *three whole days* of blundering around and back-tracking to actually construct a playable scenario — and I am not without experience in these matters, friends.

Let me put it yet *another* way: I predict that the only consumers who'll be comfortable with this program — who'll even be able to decipher it — are, a) people with actual hands-on *professional* experience designing wargames (a mighty small market indeed!), or, b) control-freaks with unlimited amounts of free time to waste.

I want to be absolutely fair about this, even if I sound contradictory: Baldwin and Rakosky have designed what may well be the ultimate wargame construction set. *Everything* that goes into the most elaborate PC wargame is



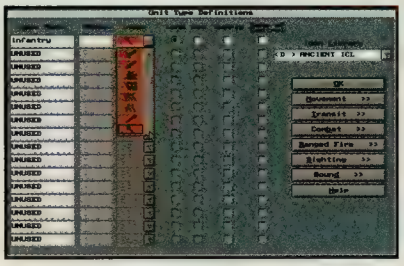
For a novel naval scenario, try the Battle of Lepanto, 1571. Spotted but unidentified units are shown as blank, generic symbols.

under your control. And yet I reacted to it as I do to a performance of Bach's *The Art of the Fugue* — I am awed by the technical mastery, but left utterly cold by the music.

Maps are sizable, paintable, or randomly generated within user-specified parameters. Every era of military technology is available. Unit icons can be selected from the large library provided, imported from elsewhere, or custom-designed down to the pixel.

Everything that is subject to modification can be modified: sighting range, combat effectiveness, entrenchment factors, movement rates, ranged fire distance, morale break-points, amount and timing of reinforcements or replacements, terrain effects —there's even a library of sound-effects, so if you don't like one kind of explosion, you can load another.

Some readers are by now saying to themselves: "General Trotter's full of it — this sounds like construction-set heaven!" I'm braced for an online flaming, but the only reply I can make is this: if you *want* that kind of micro-control, and if you're either experienced enough in programming or patient enough to wade through the morass of thick, gray verbiage that comprises the manual, bully for you. Enjoy.



There's a large library of icons, including some very bizarre and whimsical ones, that you can use to give a personalized look to your scenarios.

I had no problem creating and saving maps — I loved doing that with the old *Empire*, and it's even more fun with these spiffy SVGA graphics.

The game's "Technology Editor," however, is poorly explained and initially baffling. After hours of fooling around, I finally figured it out, then spent another three or four hours designing the technology for a new scenario.

When I *finally* built and saved a full-fledged scenario and tried to play it, it crashed on the second turn. At this point, Trotter's Rule of Diminishing Returns kicked in, and I said "Forget it."

For me, the simpler, foolproof custom scenario-builders in the original *Empire* games were just fine, thank you. They kept the game fresh for years and years. My patience with *Empire II*, however, was exhausted after three days. My problem, or the game's? At this point, I don't much care.

I did go back and play all the ready-made scenarios — enjoying some, disliking most — and now, dear readers, I've discharged my duty as a reviewer. *Empire II* goes back in its box, where it is likely to stay.

As I said at the beginning, I really hated having to write this review....

—William R. Trotter



Another successful scenario is the Duke of Marlborough's triumph at Blenheim, August 13, 1704 — another PC gaming first.

SPECIFICITY CITY

If you've read the review, you already know whether or not the scenario builder is something you want to immerse yourself in. If you *do*, here's a partial list of some of its user-modifiable features, quoted, more or less verbatim, from the manual, just to whet your appetites:

MAX R.F. STRENGTH

Defines the maximum value allowable for a unit's ranged firepower. Used to calculate the amount of damage inflicted when ranged fire hits a target; variable according to target's terrain, defensive posture, and resistance to R.F.

TERRAIN MOD

Allows you to define modifiers for ranged fire calculations based on the terrain type the target's sitting on.

MORALE BREAK POINT

Provides base value used for determining whether or not a unit becomes "demoralized." "Combat Variance" is factored in, too, yielding a formula of: Break Point +/- Variance percent.

SPEED VALUE/ MOVEMENT SPEED

Determine number of movement points allocated to a unit at start of a turn. This value only applies to units in Standard or Entrenched modes. The speed for units in Transit Mode is specified in the Unit Transit Characteristics Window, and are the points upon which the costs of moving (and performing ranged fire and combat) are based. Values can range from 0 to 100.

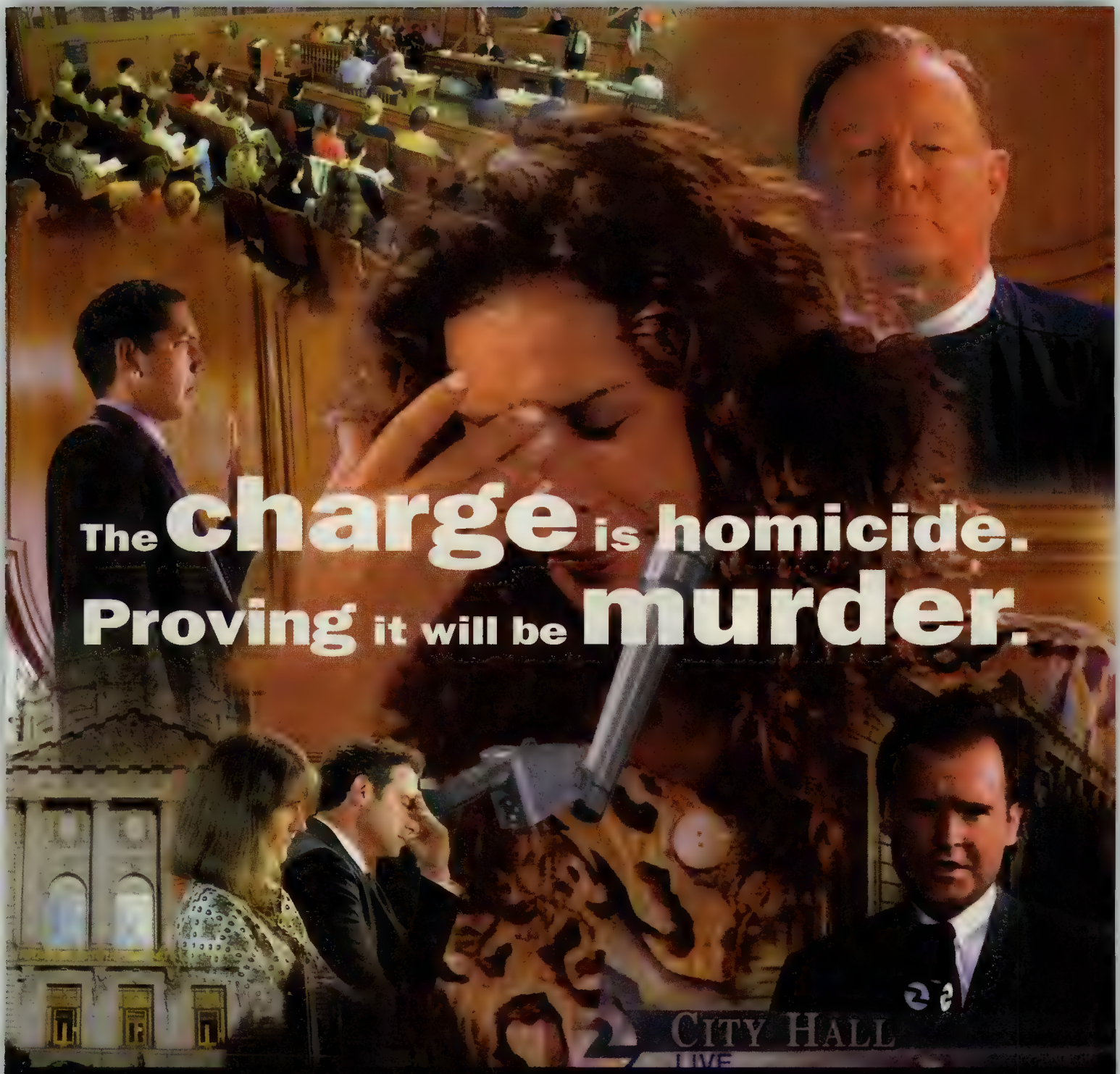
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

63%

HIGHS: The most powerful, flexible, wargame construction set ever published.

LOWS: Some preset scenarios are pathetic; scenario builder is staggeringly complex and wretchedly explained.

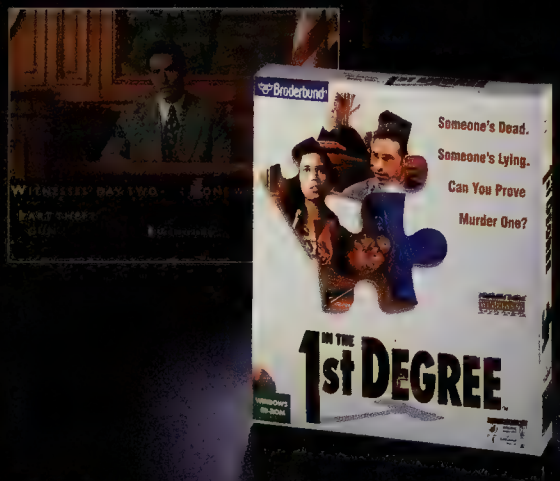
BOTTOM LINE: One of the biggest disappointments in years.



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Product Information Number 102

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Product Information Number 99

Dagger's Rage

Category: Arcade

Developer: Microforum

Publisher: Microforum, 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Canada M6M 5A1 (800) 465-2323

Required	We Recommend
Double-Speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or later; Local-bus Super VGA; Sound Blaster or compatible sound card	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Joystick; Windows 95

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

After playing *Dagger's Rage*, I was filled with an uncomfortable sense of deja vu. Memories of *Privateer*'s mercenary-pilot story line and *Raptor*'s arcade-style combat came to mind — and unfortunately, these thoughts had me wishing I was playing either of those games instead of *DR*.

Dagger's Rage is sort of a mix of *Privateer* and *Raptor*, but it seems that nobody bothered to check which parts were thrown into the mix. The plot of *Dagger's Rage* isn't bad — it just basically hits you in the face with its overblown gusto when you first load the game. It seems that you are Dagger, the hottest fighter pilot in the universe. Under the command of General Grant, you ended the recent war with the evil Vek Empire. Now Grant runs a mercenary guild, and things aren't what they seem. Grant has called you out of retirement to work for him undercover because (as the intro tells you repeatedly) he needs a man he can *trust*.

So much for the plot. Once you've managed to wade through all the bravado and chest-pounding, you'll be treated to a lackluster arcade game that just doesn't try hard enough.

The actual gameplay of *Dagger's Rage* tries to incorporate the fast hand-eye coordination action of arcade shooters like *Raptor* and *Tyrian* into a somewhat strategic model that challenges you to do more than simply fly around picking fights. Problem is, while the shooting action is reasonably entertaining, the strategic elements are irritating and never seem to work the way they're supposed to. You're penalized for retreating even when it's the only smart thing to do, and the interplanetary navigation system is a joke that looks more like a Ouija board than a space fighter's system.

If you want to veg out and fly around blasting bad guys — and if you're in a forgiving mood — *Dagger's Rage* might be worth checking out. But if you're in the market for a shooter that stands out from the crowd, you'll want to keep looking.

—John Robertson



The combat in *Dagger's Rage* is impressive enough, but the strategic elements leave a lot to be desired.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

55%

HIGHS: Excellent graphics; more than just an arcade game.

LOWS: Action is repetitive and simple; strategic elements are frustrating, clunky interface.

BOTTOM LINE: It's all been done — and done better — many times before. Only worth a look if you're tired of playing *Raptor* or *Tyrian*.

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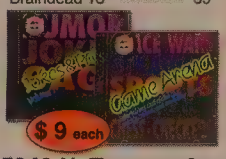
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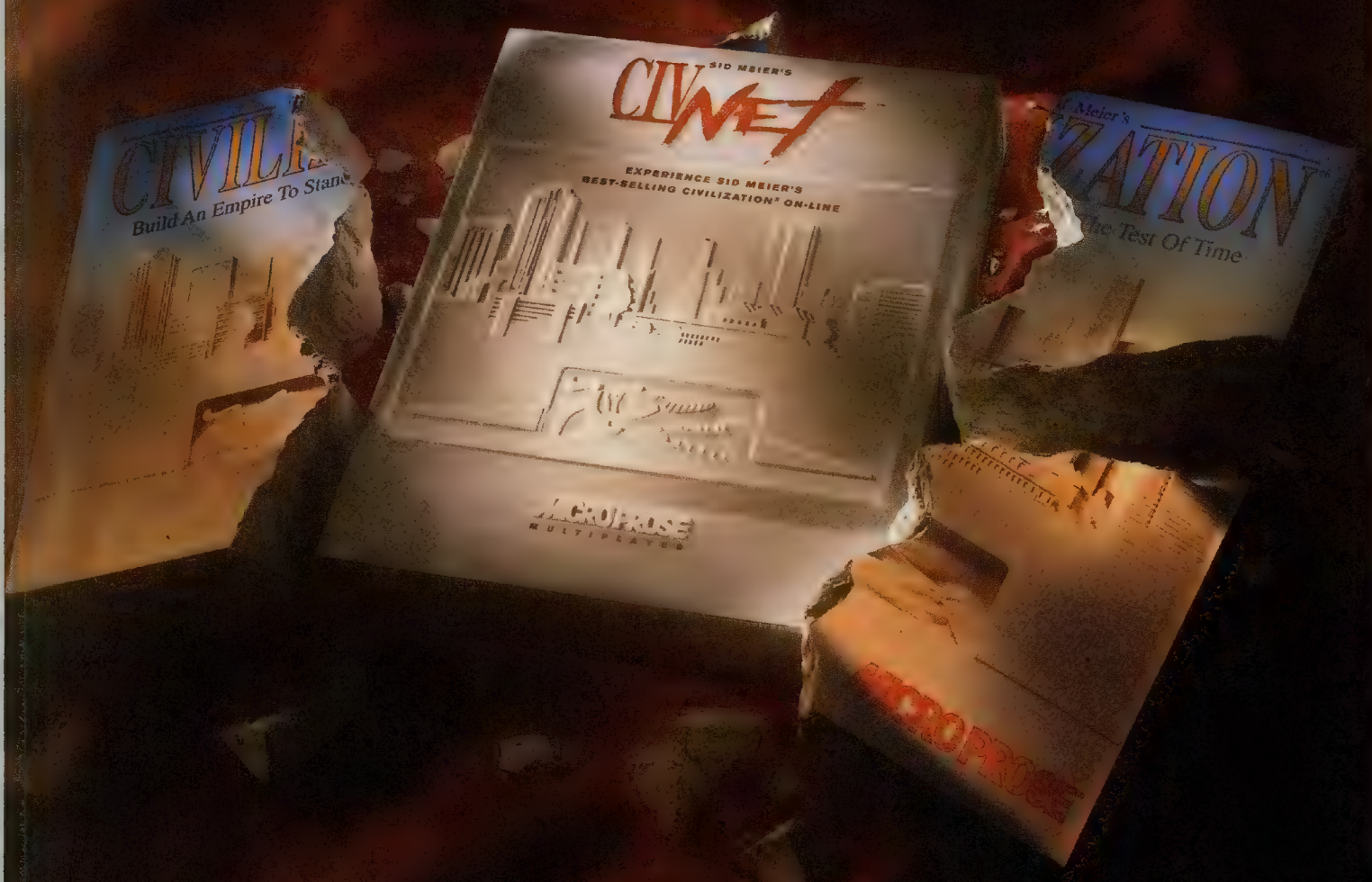
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Product Information Number 172

In the First Degree

Category: Interactive Movie

Developer: Adair & Armstrong

Publisher: Broderbund, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 (800) 521-6263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486SX/25; 4MB RAM; SVGA; 4MB hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Can't get enough of courtroom dramas? Well, here's your chance to be a big-time D.A. in a big-time murder trial.

If the real-life courtroom dramas that have held the nation's attention in recent years have piqued your interest in America's judicial system, *In the First Degree* is worth a look. Starting with a bloody murder, a prominent defendant, hotshot lawyers, and intense media coverage, you'll jump head-first into the ins and outs of legal strategy.

You play a San Francisco district attorney who must win a conviction for murder in the first degree. The defendant, an upscale artist named James Tobin, is accused of murdering his business partner, an art gallery owner named Zachary Barnes. Tobin claims it was self-defense; Barnes' wife says no way — it was cold-blooded murder. Things start to get complicated when rumors surface about Tobin's girlfriend sleeping with Barnes. You also find out about a suspicious theft that took place at the art gallery a week before the murder. On top of all that, you're getting political heat because Barnes' wife works for the mayor. What to do first?

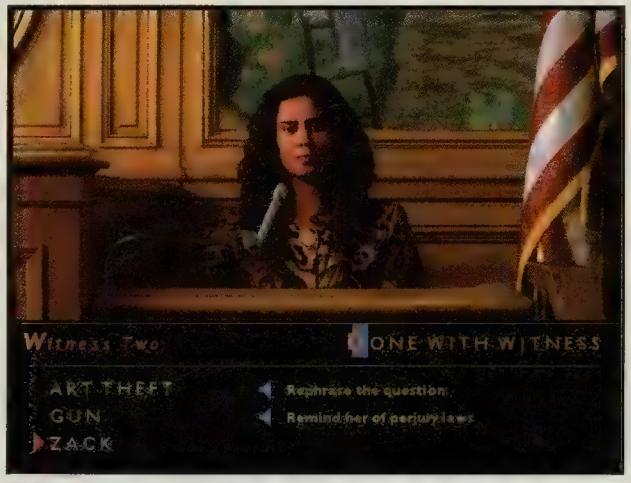
Well, once you sit through a couple of quality video sequences that introduce this complicated story, you settle into your office to hash it all out. You have access to video files of the police interviews with the witnesses, you can look through a file containing pertinent photos and documents, and you can interview the witnesses yourself. It's important to examine everything thoroughly and try to get a handle on all the evidence, so there are no unwanted surprises when the trial begins.



It's the big moment! Tobin and his smug attorney rise to hear the verdict. If you've played your cards right, you'll hear a verdict of murder in the first degree.

While the introduction and gameplay video is first-rate, the game gets a little frustrating when you're questioning people. Since the entire game consists of video clips, you're stuck waiting for these clips to load. Then you interrogate the witnesses in the standard graphic-adventure manner — you select and ask a question based on a limited number of choices. You choose from general topics rather than specific questions, but *In the First Degree* lets you hear the question your on-screen persona will pose before you commit to a choice. It's good to be able to think before you speak, so you don't stick your foot in your mouth.

However, the limited number of questions may leave you unsatisfied. Sometimes you can ask only three questions, and then you're finished with the witness — whether you want to be or not. Of course, if you're asking the questions in the correct order, you'll find out exactly what you need to know, but it's a real pain trying to figure out which questions to ask when.



When Tobin's girlfriend, Ruby, takes the stand, she admits she had an affair with Tobin's business partner, Barnes. It's your job to convince the jury that the affair was reason enough for murder.

Once you're done investigating, you go to trial. It's pretty intriguing to decide which witness to call next and what you should or should not say in court. You keep track of your progress by watching the local news, which analyzes your every move (just like in real life). If you've done a particularly poor job, Tobin's attorney will ask that the case be dismissed for lack of evidence, and the judge will comply.

Then it's back to the beginning, where you try to not to repeat your mistakes. You may play through the whole thing one or two more times in your quest for the winning strategy, but you'll probably start to get sick of seeing those same video clips. You won't discover anything new, and there are no new witnesses to be found. The save-game feature does let you try out different lines of questioning without restarting, but sometimes you're not sure where you've screwed up, so winning is basically a matter of trial and error. And once you've won your case, that's it. There's no replay value whatsoever.

But while there are a few faults to *In the First Degree*, it's well worth spending some time with. Once you become wrapped up in winning your case, you'll forgive the flaws and enjoy the drama of the story and the thoughtful way you'll have to plan your case. It's the perfect thing for Perry Mason wannabes and a good game, to boot.

—Lisa M. Howie

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: A great idea; quality video segments; good acting and story line.

LOWS: It would be more fun if there were other cases; slow access times; excessive sit-and-watch segments.

BOTTOM LINE: A quality game. If you don't mind lots of video clips and some repetition, you'll like it.



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Steel Panthers

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Wargame

Developer: Gary Grigsby, SSI Special Projects Group

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $39.95

Despite some design teething pains, *Steel Panthers* emerges as a strong and beautiful war game.

Several years ago, in the course of reviewing Gary Grigsby's *War in the East*, it occurred to me that he might well be the Tolstoy of wargaming. Like the Russian master, Grigsby can capture the epic sweep of a campaign, working on a huge gaming canvas, yet he also has a keen instinct for zooming in on the potent detail that helps illuminate and vivify the whole.

Of the approximately two dozen computer games Grigsby has designed, the majority were done in association with Strategic Simulations. Some highlights are *Kampfgruppe* (1985), the avatar of all Eastern Front games; *Second Front* (1990), the first so-called "monster game" for the PC; and *Pacific War* (1992), *still* the most ambitious wargame ever published.

The price of admission to these SSI classics was learning how to navigate the "Grigsbyian Interface," a thing of wondrous complexity, and positively Zen-like impenetrability. During the late-1980s, when wargaming was dominated by the Real-Men-Don't-Need-Tutorials attitude of the hardcore grognards, being able to handle a Grigsby interface was one of the things that separated the serious wargamer from the amateur, the men from the boys.

After the rousing cross-over success of *Panzer General*, however, SSI naturally wanted to keep on publishing wargames with the broadest possible commercial appeal. Grigsby, just as naturally, wanted to continue designing games as detailed, realistic, and historically authentic as his previous works.

It's no secret in the gaming industry (hell, *nothing* is a secret for longer than 24 hours...) that this clash of wills and philosophies generated some behind-the-scenes tension during the development of *Steel Panthers*. Obviously, the finished game represents, to some extent, a compromise design.

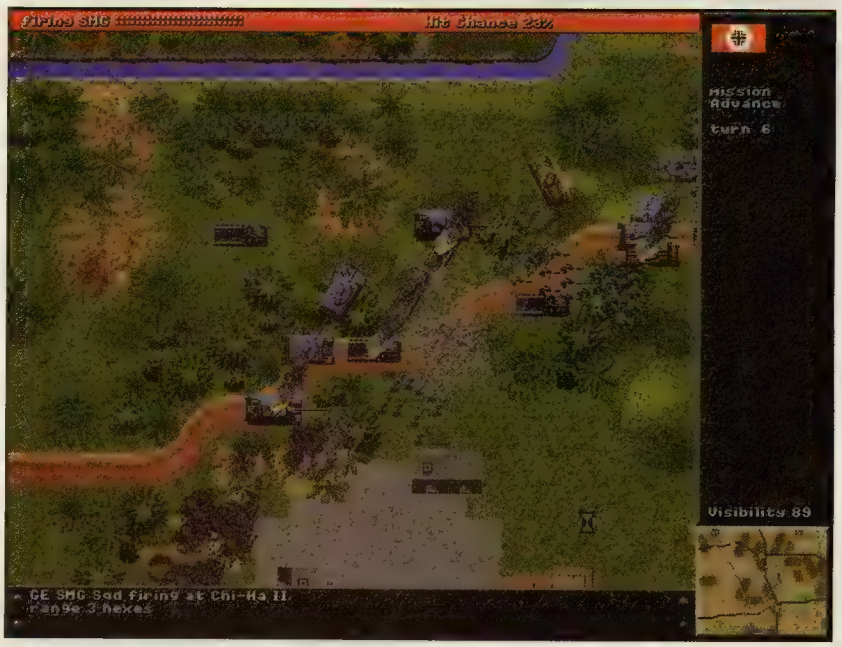
But it's an uncommonly successful one, updating many of Grigsby's classic tactical concepts, incorporating plenty of authentic detail, clad in state-of-the-art graphics, and governed by a clean, friendly interface.

Steel Panthers is a tactical-level game, depicted from a top-down view, in which each turn represents two minutes of real time. There are 60 pre-loaded scenarios, eight campaigns (including a fascinating World War three might-have-been, fought between the Russians and the Americans in 1945-1946), a random battle generator, and a game editor that allows you to custom-build scenarios from the ground up.

Borrowing a concept from *Panzer General*, the player "buys" 24 core units — which grow in experience and effectiveness as their battlefield savvy increases — and another two-dozen or so support units, including a gratifying array of tactical aircraft, each carefully modeled on its historic counterpart, that are available only on



The battle of Suomussalmi, in which Finnish ski-troops slaughtered 27,000 Russian invaders (at a cost of only 900 of their own) makes a good tutorial scenario.



Smoke, fire, explosions, and wrecked vehicles — few, if any, PC games do a better job of depicting the violence of the battlefield.

TACTICAL TIP

It's fine to use the "auto-rally" function, since, in the heat of battle, you may overlook some units that need rallying. But if you're planning to shoot with a suppressed unit, hit the manual "rally" icon *first* — you may reduce suppression enough to receive an extra shot for that turn.

a one-battle-at-a-time basis.

Movement and targeting are simple mouse-click functions. Right-click anywhere near the selected unit, and you can see its entire line-of-sight capability. Right-click on a designated unit, and you can instantly check its morale, ammo supply, and quality of leadership.

Each squad, vehicle or weapon has a specific leader, and each leader is graded according to his ability to rally, to accurately spot for artillery fire, etc. Morale is a key factor in these battles: as the manual laconically puts it, "nobody likes to get shot at." Units under fire, ambushed, surrounded, or pinned down suffer varying degrees of suppression — beyond a certain point, they will break and run or simply hunker down and refuse either to move or return fire.

If there's one thing tricky about the combat system, it's learning how to master artillery support. Barrages called in by a unit that has no line-of-sight to the target will be, at best, hit or miss affairs. Likewise, fire called in by a unit whose leader has a high artillery rating will be significantly more accurate than those called in by whoever's handy. There's a realistic time-lag built in, too, representing the delay between a battery receiving a fire mission and the time required to change the settings on the guns — in other words, you must learn to anticipate where the enemy will be in two turns, rather than where he is now.

How does all this look on the screen? In a word, *intense*. The graphics are superb, from the landscape details to the mortar tubes and their tiny crews. Mortar rounds kick up quick, jabbing puffs of dirt; heavier shells shatter buildings, crater the ground, sometimes start brush fires; smoke screens curl and drift realistically; small arms' fire hitting an armored vehicle creates a sparkling lather of tracers.

TACTICAL TIP

Engineers are useful because they carry flamethrowers and satchel charges, and they can clear minefields. But because the time scale of the games is only a half-hour or so, they *cannot* build bridges. To cross large rivers, you'll need to buy barge units. Small creeks are usually fordable by infantry and light machine guns, but anything heavier needs to be transported across by halftrack. I lost a couple of battles by neglecting to take that into account.



Of the 60 individual battles, many have never been PC-gamed before, such as Wake Island.

Equally fine are the myriad sound effects: the "whonk" of mortars firing, the slow bark of BARs contrasting with the ripping bursts of Thompsons, the "clunk" of a dud round, the decisive hammer-clang of an AP shot making a direct hit, the potent timpani-roll of a heavy artillery barrage.

Over and over again, I was impressed with how realistic the behavior of the animated units was — how quickly an ambushed unit routed, how effectively terrain influenced tactics and lethality, how a well-led unit performed so much more steadily, even if it was green, than a unit with mediocre leadership.

These battles have great sweep and momentum, yet each has moments of outstanding drama and detail. I was reminded of those utterly gripping battle-studies by General S.L.A. Marshall, books compiled from painstaking after-battle interviews with surviving participants whose recollections were fresh and sharp. Readers familiar with Gen. Marshall's books will understand that I can pay this game no higher compliment.

Over 200 types of armor are modeled in *Steel Panthers*, along with 120 weapons and every kind of infantry unit you might want, from engineers to heavy machine gun squads.

The inventory of individual battles is wonderfully varied and permits you to fight some encounters otherwise not covered in wargames, such as Wake Island and Singapore. As for the roll-your-own scenario designs, these offer near-endless possibilities for battles both realistic and bizarre. I had a rollicking good time designing and playing through a Chinese invasion of Finland, to cite one especially strange possibility. (One important note: If you choose anything other than the large install option, you'll need to create your own "SCEN" subdirectory under the "STEEL" directory, or you won't be able to save your scenarios to disk.)



Right-click on a selected unit to display full information about its status and ammo supplies.

I would judge *Steel Panthers* to be a perfect "next game" for consumers who've played *Panzer General* to exhaustion and who hanker for a wargame that offers a bit more realism and battlefield accuracy.

Whatever teething pains the design may have gone through, it has emerged as a strong, beautiful tactical war game: all the detail and realism that are hallmarks of a Grigsby design are present, smoothly wedded to a clean, easy-to-understand interface, all wrapped up with sensational graphics and sound.

—William R. Trotter



Air support is not available in all scenarios, but it's great fun to watch when a mission does occur.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Beautiful to behold, easy to learn, and full of drama.

LOWS: Inadequate manual (you'll definitely want to print out the README file!); artillery support system can be a little tricky to master.

BOTTOM LINE: One of the best tactical-level wargames ever designed for the PC.



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—Computer Game Review

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Product Information Number 225

Fury³

Category: Arcade action

Developer: Terminal Reality

Publisher: Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA (206) 882-8080

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/66; 8MB RAM; Windows 95 or DOS 5.0 with Windows 3.1 or later; Local-bus SVGA	Pentium; 55MB hard-drive space; 16MB RAM; Mouse; Joystick or gamepad; Windows-compatible sound card

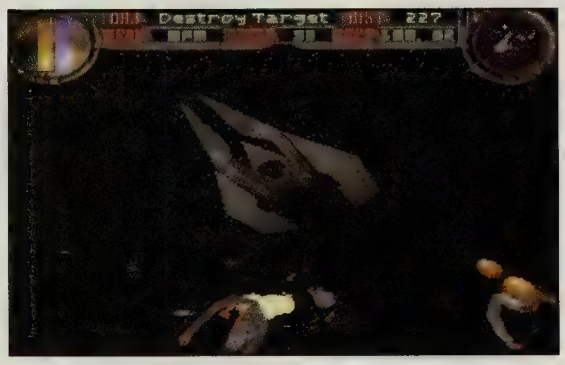
M.S.R.P.: $39.95

Microsoft's first action game doesn't break new ground, but who cares when there's so much stuff to destroy?

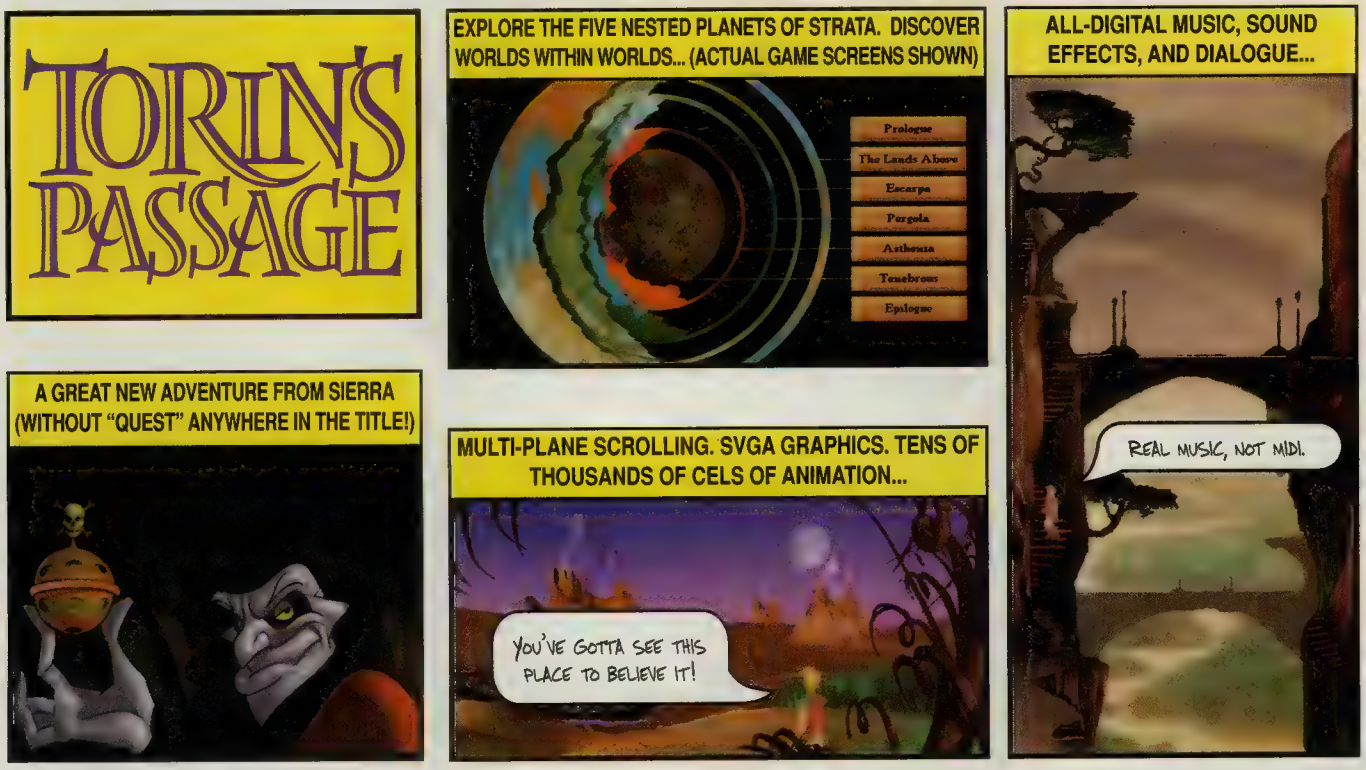
It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that *Fury³* is basically the same game as the current action hit, *Terminal Velocity*. In fact, the only real difference between the two is that *Fury³* was designed for optimal performance under the Windows operating system (no surprise, since it bears the Microsoft name) and the result is that *Fury³* edges out *Terminal Velocity* in terms of performance, graphics, and sound-card compatibility.

Microsoft was careful not to tinker too much with the elements that made *Terminal Velocity* such a hit. The plots are essentially interchangeable (you're cast as a futuristic fighter pilot out to end a bloody war between two worlds) but everything else about *Fury³* is anything but standard. The texture-mapped terrain graphics are top-notch, easily on a par with those in *Magic Carpet* or *Descent* — not surprising, since the game runs at 640 x 480 resolution (and you can play within a sizable window if you choose). In addition to zipping along the surface of each planet-blasting ground installations to smithereens with a variety of lasers, missiles, and cannon, you'll also get to take on Bion fighter craft above the clouds, as well as journey into tunnels chock-full of obstacles, powerups, and enemies.

But most of your time will be spent zipping through the sky in search of ground targets, and *Fury³* offers a full 360



Besides three cockpit views, *Fury³* also lets you admire your ship from a chase-plane perspective and an adjustable external view like this one. It's pretty, but hardly the viewpoint to use if you're serious about winning.





It's a good thing Bion fighters regenerate when destroyed, because it's a pretty simple matter to zoom in behind them for an easy kill.

degrees of movement there. The controls are simple and easy to master, and four levels of difficulty mean that even beginners can hop in and enjoy some success in blowing things up — and man, do things blow up *good* in this game!

While *Fury³* may have the goods in the graphics/performance department, the nod goes to *Terminal Velocity* in one crucial area: modem and network play. Why Microsoft chose not to include what's increasingly considered a key component of new PC games is a mystery.

In terms of gameplay, one nagging problem is the navigation system: The location of all objectives and targets is based on a grid system, but the Satellite Map is an oval, with no grids superimposed over it. Since your ship is always in the middle of the map, it's tough to visualize just where you are in a sector, and initially it can be pretty frustrating to try and return to the location of a particular powerup or tunnel entrance (mission objectives are pretty easy to find, though — just turn your ship until the compass points at 12 o'clock).

Fury³ is a very good game, but it's so close to *Terminal Velocity* that players who got their fill with that game probably won't get their money's worth out of this one. But if you haven't played *Terminal Velocity*, or if you did and have been waiting for a sequel or add-on scenarios, then by all means pick up *Fury³*. If nothing else, it's a truly justifiable excuse to upgrade to Windows 95.

—*Steve Poole*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: 3D action fans will love the nonstop flyin' and shootin'; excellent terrain graphics.

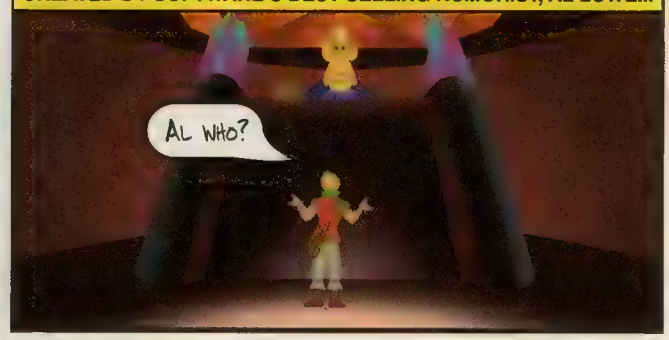
LOWS: High system requirements; gameplay gets old; where's the modem-play option?

BOTTOM LINE: This is a first-rate 3D game that proves Microsoft is serious about gaming.

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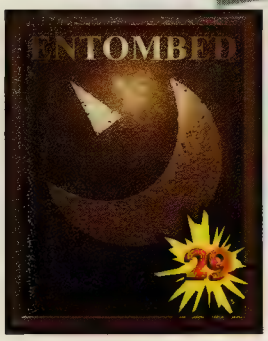
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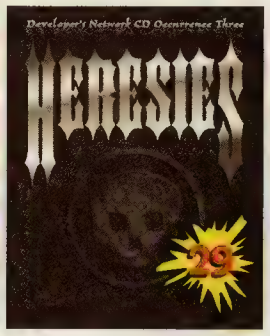
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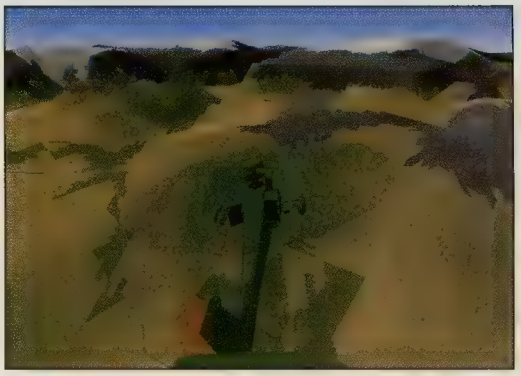
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INTERACTIVE MAGIC

Panthers in the Shadows

Category: Wargame

Developer: HPS Simulations

Publisher: HPS Simulations, P.O. Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055-2345 (408) 554-8381

Required	We Recommend
VGA; 386; 2MB RAM; 4MB hard-disk space; Mouse	486; 4MB RAM

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

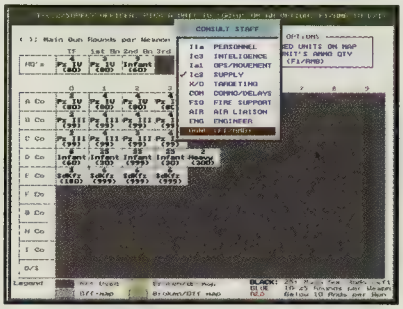
Once again, HPS Simulations shows that serious wargaming with deep statistical data needn't be a bore.

HPS Simulations is another one of those hardy "home brew" companies that stoutly defies corporate trends, proudly seeks to fill a specialized niché, and has established a reputation for customer service that is (or *should be*) the envy of many larger companies.

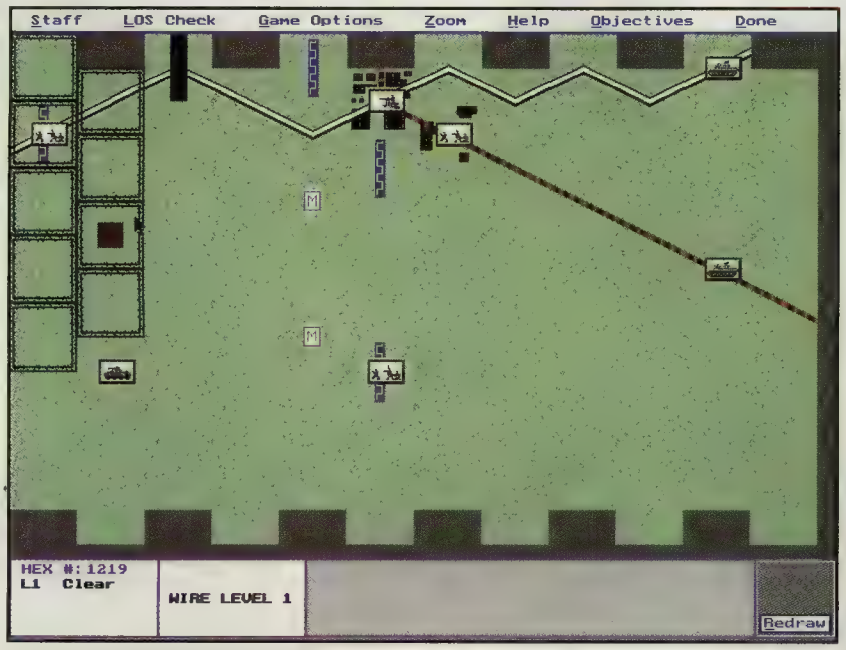
HPS caters to the needs of the "hardcore" wargamers, the so-called *grognards*, a passionate minority of demanding (and aging — many of these folks got hooked on wargames during the 1960s, in the heyday of Avalon Hill and SPI board games) gamers who worship at the altar of authentic detail.

It was designer Scott Hamilton's obsession with accurate minutiae that won plaudits for his previous Eastern Front game, *Tigers on the Prowl*. *Panthers* is the Western Front sequel, and it is even more densely packed with authenticity and detail.

An example of this attention to detail is projectile penetration, which is based on calculations that take into account the round's velocity (adjusted for air drag), size, density, mass and hardness versus the target's armor and the angle at which the round strikes.



The level of detail is amazing, and the interface is solidly designed for easy access.



Don't be put off by the plain-Jane graphics: this is a powerful and often exciting game.

Ground and atmospheric effects are factored in: dust levels and smoke affect line-of-sight; illumination can be used in night actions; dud rounds and jamming can affect a battle; specialty weapons like flail tanks can be used to clear minefields; engineers can prime and blow bridges; amphibious, airborne, and glider operations are possible.

The database used to calculate these factors is huge, encompassing 1500 weapon systems, including many that were not actually used, but *could* have been. In the Intermediate and Advanced games, the player gets to set up any sort of battle they desire, as simple or as complex as he or she wants it to be.

There are five pre-programmed scenarios, including one tutorial action that's fairly dramatic. Each hex represents 100 meters, each turn one minute. Delays are realistically incorporated: if you request off-the-board artillery support, for example, it will be fired much more promptly if you route the request through the highest available HQ.

Since HPS values "game" above "chrome," players used to the sexy graphics of games such as *Panzer General* may well be disappointed by the spartan appearance of *Panthers*. But the graphics are certainly as good as they *need* to be, and the games are so absorbing that the point quickly becomes moot.

Because of its massive, uncompromising dedication to accurate detail, *Panthers* is unlikely to appeal to the casual wargamer. Indeed, the box even carries a forthright warning that *Panthers* "is not recommended for first-time gamers without at least some understanding of military forces and operations."

But for those who really want to explore World War Two weapons and tactics at the finest possible level of detail, this game will command great respect. It is obviously a labor of love.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Unexcelled realism and detail. A serious tool for study and a formidable game.

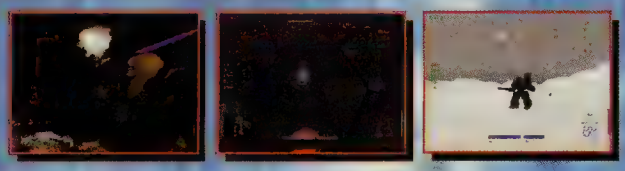
LOWS: Drab graphics, wretched sound effects; demands a high level of commitment.

BOTTOM LINE: Overwhelming for casual wargamers; hardcore gamers will love its complexities.

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Product Information Number 91

Endorfun

Category: Puzzle Game

Developer: onesong partners, inc.

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive, 2210 West Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91506 (800) 482-3766

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; Windows 3.1; 8MB RAM	Windows-compatible sound card

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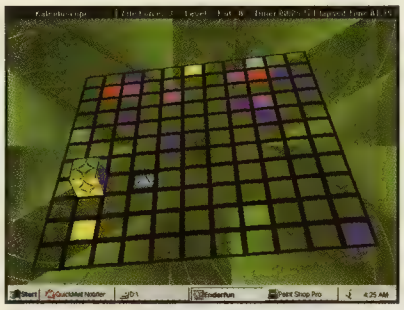
Playing *Endorfun* is like eating cotton candy. It's light, fluffy, colorful — and, in large doses, can make you sick to your stomach.

Endorfun is billed as a "game experience" that has a New Age-meets-*Tetris* feel. The object is to gain "Life Force" points by rolling a multi-colored cube around on the playing field — a grid filled with color squares — then matching the cube's colors to those on the board. There are special squares that gain you extra points, add seconds to your time, etc., and that's about it.

Sure, there are more than 40 games with nifty names like Karma, X-treme, and Heart's Desire, but these are nothing more than new color combinations and subtle variations on the basic theme.

While you're moving your little "Light Body" cube around on the "Unified Field," you hear funky New Age music that reportedly contains positive, life-affirming subliminal messages (of course, you'll never know if there really are messages in the music since, after all, they're subliminal). When you end a game, you get more life-affirming messages: "You have the power," "You create positive change in yourself." It's like being in a fortune-cookie factory.

The worst part of *Endorfun* is the Fruitopia-style backgrounds that shimmer and swirl while you're playing. The color combinations are so ugly and distracting, you'll quickly understand why the game gives you the option of turning the backgrounds off. You can turn the music and sound effects off, too, and play *Endorfun* in blissful silence. But why? The only fun you'll get from this product is by playing with all the options turned on so you can hoot and holler at the awful colors and music. And just when you think it can't get any uglier or more annoying, it does.



Moving your "Light Body" cube around the "Unified Field" helps you absorb the "Life Force" found in the colored blocks.

Endorfun simply isn't entertaining. If you're looking for mindless activity during a work break, play *Tetris* or *Solitaire*. They may not be as colorful or have uplifting messages, but at least they're fun.

—Lisa M. Howie

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

59%

HIGHS: If you like no-brainers, *Endorfun* is as fluffy as they come. It's the Lite 1990s version of *Tetris*.

LOWS: Excruciating color combinations, annoying New Age music, boring gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: *Endorfun* just isn't fun. There are much better puzzle games out there.

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Item#	Name	$Cost
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Product Information Number 218

Werewolf vs. Comanche

Category: Air Combat Circulation

Developer: NovaLogic

Publisher: NovaLogic, 26010 Mureau, Suite 200, Calabasas, CA (818) 878-0325

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 386 or better; 8 Meg RAM; VGA	Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/66 or better; Supported sound card; Joystick

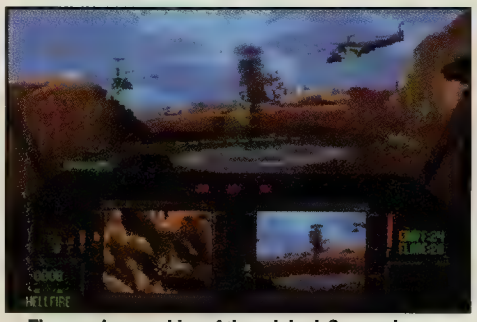
M.S.R.P.: $59.95

***Comanche* returns with a new sidekick and some multi-player options that help keep it from biting the dust.**

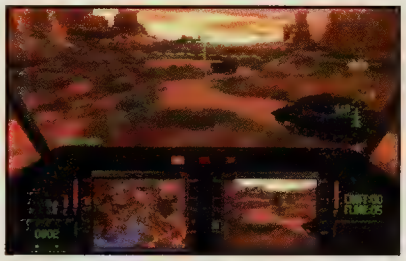
Released nearly two years ago during an unprecedented drought of good flight sims, Novalogic's *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* bridged the gap between simulations and action games with it's fast-flying style. It wasn't the most accurate flight simulation on the market, but it was fun as a shoot-'em-up game, and boasted some pretty advanced graphics for its day. And now, like it or not, *Comanche* returns with a few tricks up its sleeve in *Comanche vs. Werewolf*.

This 2-CD package includes the next version in the *Comanche* line, but fans of the original will find the differences between this new *Comanche* and the previous version aren't all that deep — a few tweaks to the game mechanics and updated scenarios are about all.

If that were all *Werewolf vs. Comanche* had to offer, this would have been a very disappointing release. But the main attraction of the game is the inclusion of a new game on a separate CD — *Werewolf* — and the option to connect the two games either via network, direct link, or modem.



The smudgy graphics of the original *Comanche* haven't changed, but they do run incredibly smooth on slower machines.



***Werewolf vs. Comanche* puts you in hostile territory, this time fighting terrorist forces.**



The in-game graphics haven't improved much, but NovaLogic still has some of the coolest cutscene graphics around.

Reviewing *Werewolf* or *Comanche* separately would be a waste of time, since they are essentially the same game. The controls for both of the games are identical, and the only real differences are very slight tweaks to make the helicopters look different from each other.

The missions are, thanks to the end of the cold war, very similar for both the Russian KA-50 Werewolf and the RAH-66 Comanche, and consist mostly of strikes against the whipping boy of the New World Order — militant terrorist groups.

The stand-alone missions are challenging and fun in a goofy sort of way — though you have to wonder why they all seem to take place over terrain similar to the Grand Canyon. Still, hills are better than drab desert plains for helo-flyin' fun, and that's what you'll see plenty of.

If you were hoping for a revamp of *Comanche*'s pixelicious graphics, though, forget it. Everything looks about as it did in the first game — blurry, indistinct targets and shape-shifting landscapes that seem to form as you approach them are pretty much the rule. This is a plus to those in computer-upgrade hell, since both games run well on machines that would choke on the current crop of high-end flight sims; but to those of you used to today's sims, the graphics will just look dated.

But I'm willing to go easy on the smudgy graphics, because the real attraction in *Werewolf vs. Comanche* game is its head-to-head action. The connection options in *Werewolf vs. Comanche* are pretty standard, and getting into the heat of battle is extremely easy, giving you the chance to tackle the wiliest of foes — a human opponent. There are several multi-player options and scenarios available, and you can choose to play in cooperative or competitive modes. When playing against your partner, you have a choice of either trying to complete your mission objectives or concentrating on slamming a few Stinger missiles into your opponent. The cooperative mode puts both players side by side as they race to defeat a computer foe.

It all adds up to ferocious fun, quite like a *Doom* Deathmatch gone airborne. But one of the most common features among multi-player games of this type is missing — the chat mode. There is a certain satisfaction in blowing your pal out of the sky and then throwing it in his face with a few choice words while he or she starts over. Sadly, though, this feature doesn't appear in *Werewolf vs. Comanche*.

The target market of *Werewolf vs. Comanche* certainly isn't the hard-core flight freak or helo-jock wannabe looking for the latest or greatest in realism. This is simple, entertaining action that doesn't try to overwhelm you with bothersome details or depth. It's a very good choice if you're looking for a new thrill in multi-player action.

—John Robertson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

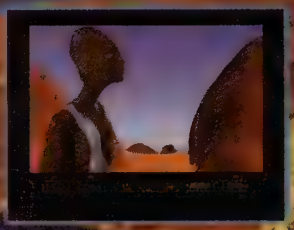
78%

HIGHS: Network and modem gameplay, challenging if unrealistic missions.

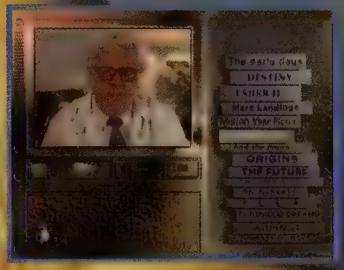
LOWS: Flight model and missions are simplistic, games a little too similar.

BOTTOM LINE: An excellent value for people looking to play a helicopter game head-to-head.

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Product Information Number 215

Battle Beast

Category: Fighting Game

Developer: 7th Level

Publisher: 7th Level Inc., P.O. Box 832190, Richardson, TX 75083-2190 (214) 437-5531

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 256 Colors; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Gamepad; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

It's certainly not the greatest fighting game around, but the cartoon graphics and hilarious premise make *Battle Beast* a lot of fun.

Creating excellent cartoon animation under Windows has been 7th Level's primary achievement, with titles like *Take Your Best Shot* and *Howie Mandel's Tuneland* featuring a trademark sense of style, humor, and playability. While most of their titles haven't been aimed at serious gamers, *Battle Beast* takes on the world of arcade fighting games and infuses it with 7th Level's special brand of graphics and comedy.

This is a game filled with cute, cuddly creatures that can transform at will into hulking, armored monsters, complete with lasers and projectile weapons. Each beast has its own personality, with a list of hilarious moves to match. The game's graphics are so well done, they'll remind you of some of the cartoons you loved as a kid — but this time, you get to control the characters.



When you are non-morphed, you have special weapons you pull out to pulverize the enemy. Of course, this poor turtle doesn't stand a chance against the large metal machine he's facing...

The game's principal villain is an evil Toad Man who has released his poisonous frogs on humanity. In order to battle the slimy onslaught, the military has created the ferocious Battle Beasts, but the Toad Man has altered their programming to force them to battle each other as well as the toads.

You make your way to the Toad Man's holding facility by fighting in various locations, all connected by a maze-like sewer system. Even between fights, the action doesn't stop; you're in a race to the next battleground, and the first beast to arrive has a certain amount of time to kill frogs for points, as well as pick up hidden items and find secret rooms.

The commands in *Battle Beast* are different from those in other fighting games — and they take quite a bit of getting used to — but they do give you several different moves to use against your opponent. Unfortunately, the response time with either the keyboard or joystick is rather slow, so it's difficult to control your character with any precision. The fights usually turn into a twitching match, with each player just pressing buttons as fast as possible.

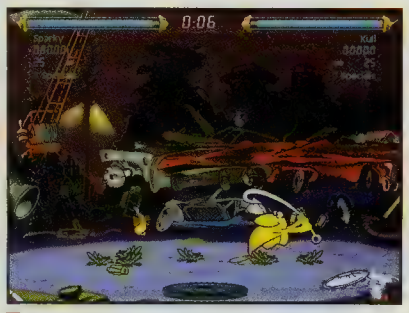
Each time you play a game, you choose the beast you want to control, then choose your opponent. That's a pretty common way to start a fighting game, but it's where the similarities end. In *Battle Beast*, you'll fight this same opponent through each location until you reach the final stage. It would've made more sense if you fought *all* the other beasts, tournament-style, on your way to the Toad Man. Instead, you'll only see two of the six possible beasts, and the only way to experience the others is to play a completely new game.

Battle Beast has depth and humor that should appeal to many gamers (especially the younger set), but the repetitive structure and sluggish response keep it from living up to the standards of an honest-to-goodness fighting game. It's nice to look and laugh at, but it's certainly not the "Ultimate Fight Game" it claims to be.

—Michael Wolf



The Powerizer is what gives your pets their mutating metal ability. This is the heart of *Battle Beast* headquarters.



Kuli the Fish uses a fishhook as his special weapon. It works well against the mutated frogs surrounding him.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Wonderful graphics, inventive story, and a whole lot of silly humor.

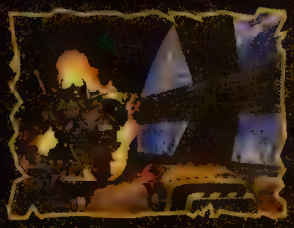
69%

LOWS: Controls are sluggish; lack of a "tournament" structure makes for repetitive battles.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a decent fighting game, but one with significant flaws.

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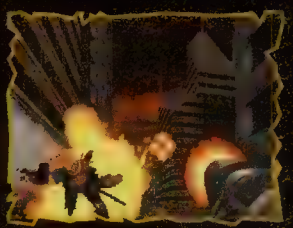
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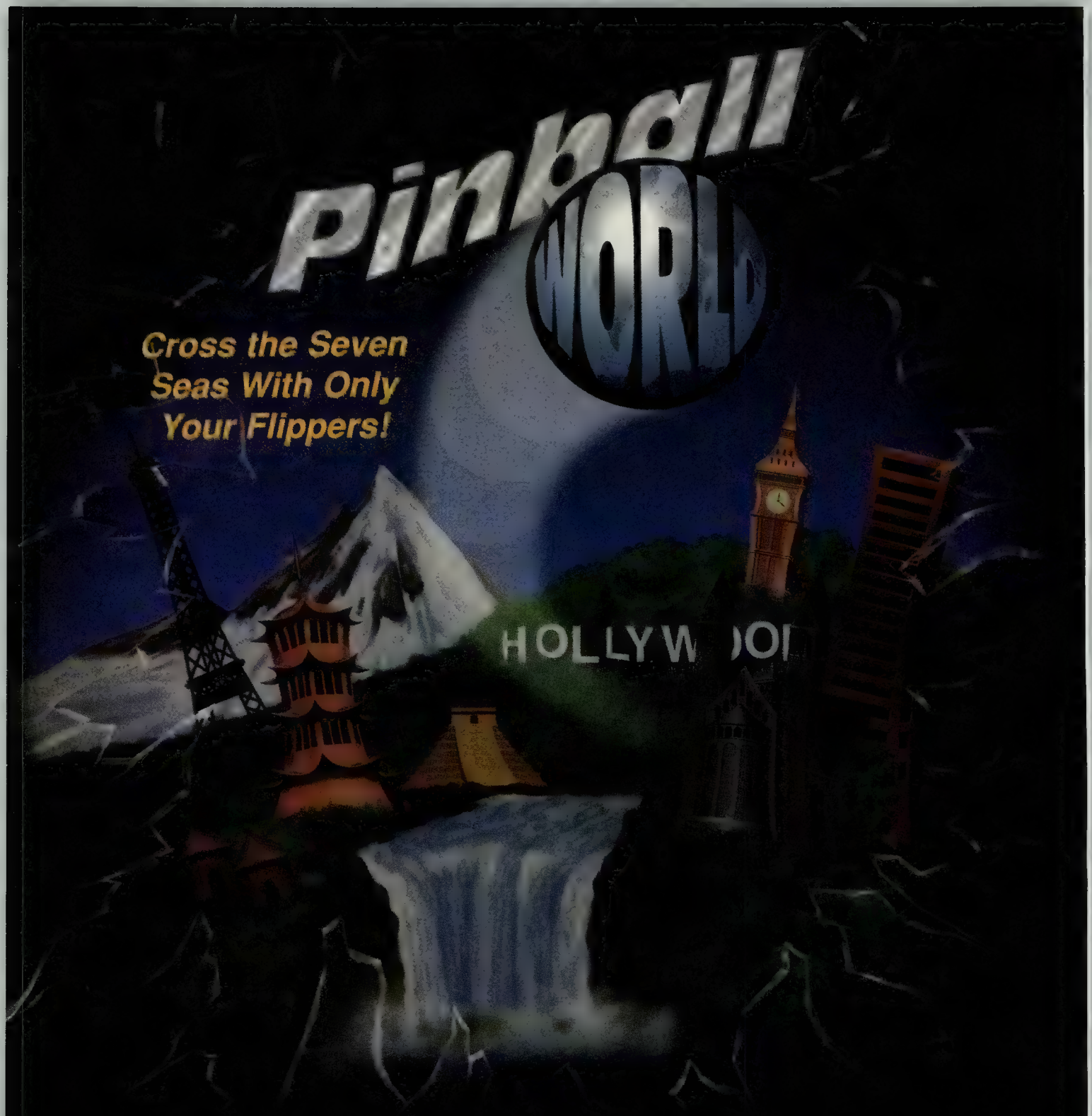
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Product Information Number 80

Monopoly CD-ROM

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Economic game

Developer: Westwood Studios/Parker Bros.

Publisher: Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-9710

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or later; 640x480 256 color display; 10MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; Internet connection with TCP/IP; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $49.95

In bringing this classic to computer, Westwood has created the mother of all board-game conversions.

What can you do to a make a board game work well on a computer? Well, for starters, you can create challenging artificial opponents so gamers can play even when alone.

To really bring it into the '90s, you have to have head-to-head play over modem, preferably via online service or the Internet, where you can meet new players from all over the world. You have to make it flexible enough to use house rules that diverge from the official rules of play.

There also needs to be something extra that uses the unique capabilities of computers to make the game special: animation, for instance, as well as save games, configuration options, and other useful foo-faws.

And to make all this come together, you have to hire a talented developer to program it all. Westwood Studios, creators of fantasy roleplaying game *Lands of Lore* and the current strategy smash *Command & Conquer*, certainly fit that bill.

And so we come to *Monopoly CD-ROM*: a joint venture between boardgame titan Parker Brothers, top-notch programmers Westwood Studios, and publisher Virgin Interactive. It has just about everything a boardgame conversion to computer should have, and then some.

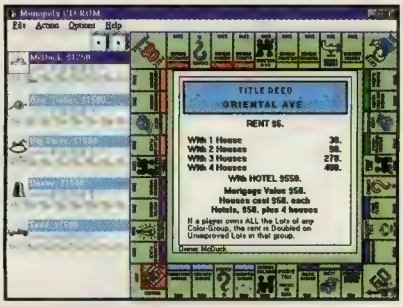
It isn't easy to pull off a board game on computer: take a look at past reviews of board-game conversions and you'll find that they're almost invariably described as flat and lifeless. Not so with *Monopoly*, which comes to life in new and inventive ways. For starters, you're working from what is easily the best known and loved boardgame of all time. Anyone reading this magazine is familiar with its components and concepts. Each player — the more the better — picks a game piece (shoe, dog, cannon, hat, wheelbarrow, iron, battleship, rocking horse, thimble, or car) and then proceeds to roll dice to move around the board. Each spot on the board is filled with either a property, utility, or some special function, such as Community Chest or Chance cards. The goal is to buy properties so you can charge rent to any who land on them, until all but one player is left penniless.

As anyone can tell you, there's a lot more to the game than that. The fun comes in trading, expanding, creating monopolies, and generally acting like a greedy sow. It's such a *social* game that making it a computer game would seem to take away a good deal of the fun.

But for *Monopoly CD-ROM*, Westwood has come up with a few clever options to take care of that particular dilemma. In place of friends whose throats you can cut, you'll get artificial opponents such as Einstein, Sneaky, and Bubbles who provide a good range of challenges. Even better, you can alter the AI routines and develop computer opponents who are tougher by editing the decision variables of the AI



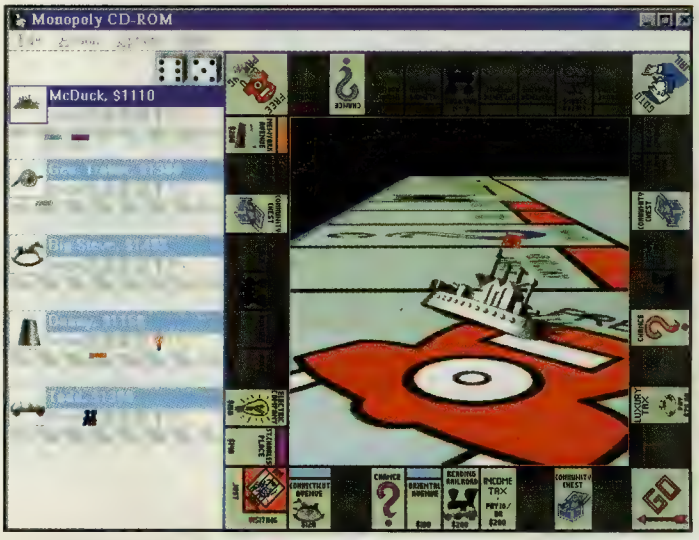
The cannon does a victory dance in a rain of your money.



You can choose to buy any unowned properties, or try to get them at auction.



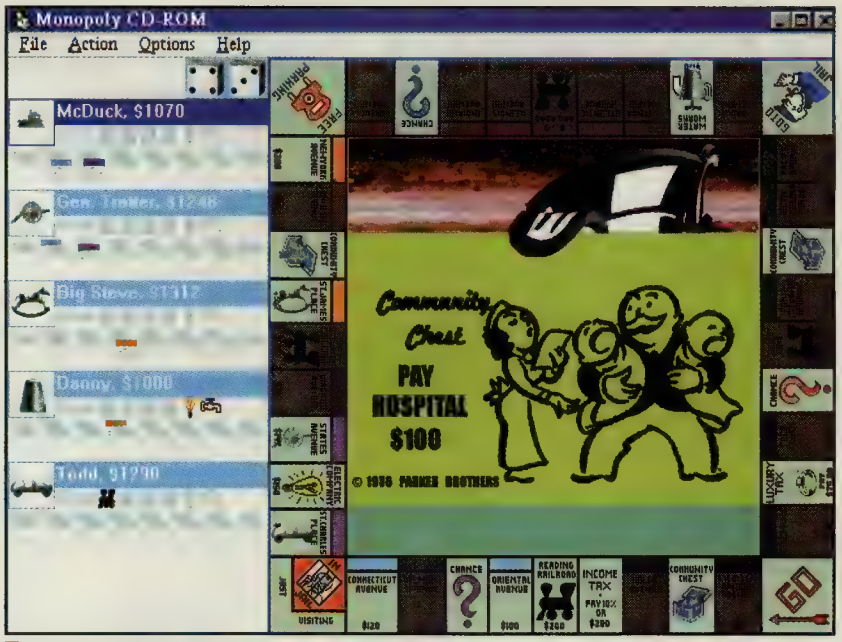
The purple properties are definitely in the low-rent district of *Monopoly*.



The battleship rounds a corner. Note that unowned properties are grayed out.



If you want to trade with another player, you can use this swap screen to set out the deal.



Chance and Community Chest are designed like the traditional *Monopoly* cards.

Making Your Own AI

Yep, that's right, you can edit your own artificial intelligence routines in *Monopoly* to make the best possible computer opponent. This is done by editing the number values in the *.AI files. A small sample of some parameters follows:

Properties
The first set of twenty-eight decision variables lets you tell your AI how much it likes a particular property by giving it a value from 0 - 200 (ie: NEW_YORK_AVENUE = 50).

Optimism
Allows the AI to predict likelihood of achieving a monopoly.

Property multiplier
Increases the overall value of properties when comparing them to cash. The higher the value, the more highly the AI will value property over money.

Minimum desired cash on hand
Tells the AI to always try and keep this much cash on hand, which might make it not purchase property and buildings.

Send property to auction factor
When the AI lands on a free property, it will look at other player's cash. If they are low on money, it will send a property to auction to try to get it at a discount.

Minimum profit
How much the AI expects to profit before agreeing to trade.

Houses value multiplier
Affects how the AI perceives the value of building hotels.

Decision delays
Sets how long the AI will think about an action.



Uncle Pennybags gets our reviewer to pay up.

files. If computer opponents just aren't cutting it, you can hop on the Internet and, with any SLIP connection, play against up to five other opponents (see sidebar).

A gaggle of options makes *Monopoly CD-ROM* widely entertaining. The official rules are the default setting, but there are also options for the most common house rules, such as fines and taxes being paid to Free Parking, double pay-outs for landing on GO, hidden cash, auctions, and numerous others. All the normal game elements — mortgages, building houses and hotels, and trading—are included. To trade with other players (a crucial aspect of *Monopoly*), you can pull up a trade screen where you lay out just what you want and what you're willing to offer. Opponents can either accept or reject your offer, or can hold out for more.

So Westwood has created a faithful version of *Monopoly*, but have they created an interesting one? Most definitely. The board is still a flat screen, but dozens of animations have been added to make play more lively. The little silver pieces come to life and move across the board in beautifully rendered 3D images, each with its own set of movements. The ship sinks into the board at one point, and a periscope crests the surface and peeks around before the ship bobs to the top and continues on its way. The cannon rolls and falls apart and sometimes takes wing to fly around the board. When someone collects rent money, their piece may do a little chicken dance in a shower of bills. When you get socked with a fine, Uncle Pennybags turns your piece upside down and shakes the money out of you. Plus, each set of properties has their own look: the low rent districts are broken-down slums, while areas like Park Place and Boardwalk feature elegant lawns and pink flamingos. The more you watch these animations, the more they seem to change, and even after you think you've seen them all, a fresh one will pop up.

Some people will probably find the animations intrusive and pointless and turn them off, but they do add the feeling of an extra dimension to the game, and they look great. More important is that this feature-packed game just feels *right*. With so many options, and Internet play to boot, this is one time the computer game goes someplace the board game just can't. It may still be a flat, familiar game in some ways, but it's also a damned entertaining one.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Super-smooth animations, Internet play, slick interface and plenty of options.

90%

LOWS: It is, after all, still a board game conversion, and so ultimately has a flat feel.

BOTTOM LINE: We bet that even *Monopoly*-haters will be charmed by this clever and well-executed game.

Mission: DEADLY SKIES™

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Vertical loops...quick turns...speed bursts...air brakes. Flying by the seat of your pants in a one-on-one dogfight to the death can make a pilot kind of queasy. It doesn't matter that you're armed to the teeth with gun cannons, heat seeking missiles and guided missiles. You still have to keep the other guy in your sights using whatever moves you've got. Did you remember to save that dogfight bag from lunch?





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PC CD-ROM

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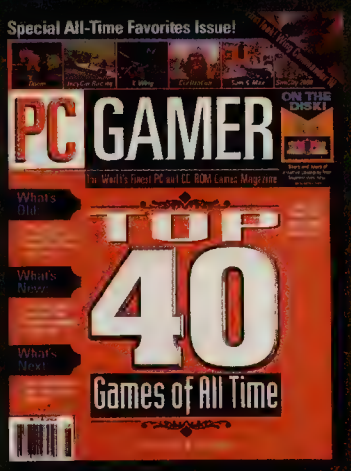
SEGA SATURN

PlayStation

Product Information Number 154

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Under Pressure

Category: Puzzle game

Developer: Chaos Effect/Millennium Interactive

Publisher: Starhill Productions, 139 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 442-5000

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 1.2MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

M.S.R.P.: $29.95

Just about every game genre has at least one defining game, something so original and fresh that it invariably prompts others to try to imitate its elusive qualities. *Under Pressure* is one of those imitators, paying homage to *Tetris* and Rubik's Cube, trying to be both, but succeeding at neither.

The object of this puzzler is to maneuver shapes around a grid and into their "energy tanks," not by moving the individual shapes, but by moving an entire row or column of the grid all at once. As the levels get harder, the game puts obstacles in your way, adding special items that make it harder to move the shapes. It's a simple, well-executed idea that blends the two elements into something new and provides some real challenges — but that's not enough to overcome a few nagging problems.

The game looks sharp, with a sense of style that matches the puzzle's unique gameplay. Unfortunately, getting into the action will prove more frustrating than the game itself. On a 486/50 with 8MB of RAM, *Under Pressure* is almost unplayable. The only way to control the game is with the mouse, and on any system slower than a Pentium, the mouse pointer is so lagged and fades in and out so frequently that it's nearly impossible to make precise movements. This, combined with unforgiving time limits at even the easiest levels, makes the game incredibly frustrating.

There's no questioning the lure of *Under Pressure*'s basic premise; it's fun, simple and an ever-increasing challenge. On a machine that harnesses Windows 95's power to the utmost, the play is fun and just as addictive as the hype on the package suggests. But if you're using a slower machine, you'll find it's just too slow to be enjoyed — and that's something they *don't* tell you on the box.

—John Robertson



The graphics are sharp, and the idea is a cool one: Maneuver the shapes into the proper receptacles before time runs out.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

68%

HIGHS: Intriguing puzzles, super graphics.

LOWS: Slow and unwieldy, unless you have some considerable horsepower in your computer.

BOTTOM LINE: Only high-end Windows 95 users who love puzzles need apply.

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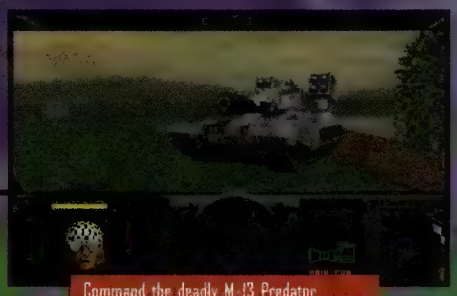
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you see before you die is a
blinding flash of light.

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Product Information Number

Primal Rage

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Fighting Game

Developer: Teeny Weeny Games, Ltd.

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive, 674 Sycamore Dr., Milpitas, CA 95035-0782 (408) 433-3999

Required	We Recommend
Single-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/25; 4MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or later; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 16MB RAM; PCI or VLB SVGA; Supported sound card; Gamepad or joystick

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Feeling a little primitive? Journey back in time as one of the fiercest creatures to walk the earth.

There's nothing more embarrassing than doing a Scoop! on something that looks like it could be a killer game, only to find that the finished product doesn't live up to your expectations. Sure, we do everything we can to bring you all the details of what the final product will be like, but in computer games — just as in life — things don't always turn out the way you expect.

Luckily, our first impressions usually turn out to be right on the money; after an exciting first-look at Time Warner Interactive's PC conversion of last year's arcade smash, I'm happy to report that the finished product is even better than anticipated. The combat here is fast, furious, bloody, and funny, and the character graphics are probably the best ever seen in a PC fighting game. On second thought, they might be the best in *any* game with this much movement and action.

But, you're probably asking yourself, what exactly would prompt seven prehistoric critters to duke it out in a deadly duel to the death? Well, it's got something to do with the gods (in this case, dinosaurs and apemen) being sent into suspended animation by a wizard named Balsafas millions of years ago. When a meteor collides with Earth, the gods are awakened, and they're pretty pissed off. Taking control of one of the critters, you've got to defeat all the rest to take over the world and rule the new Urth.

Several things make *Primal Rage*... well, I hate to use the word, but here goes: cool. For starters, the stop-motion animation is fantastic. Just like the coin-op arcade game, the character graphics for *Primal Rage*'s primitive combatants are based on 3D puppets that were video-captured through a wide range of movements, then translated to produce the onscreen animations. The results simply have to be seen to be believed. *Primal Rage* has some of the most detailed character animations that you'll find in a 2D fighter and makes the video-captured actors of the *Mortal Kombat* series look like cardboard cut-outs.



When Chaos beats his chest in victory, it's enough to make you feel the call of the wild — even if you lost the round.



Each fight is preceded by a closeup of the combatants. You may not believe it, but the graphics are better during gameplay than they are here!



You've got to get in dangerously close to pull off Blizzard's Air Throw, but it's worth it!

Not only do the beasties have a real sense of depth and texture, but you'll start to notice each one has its own unique personality as well. When the blue apeman, Chaos, beats his chest after a victory, for example, he really looks like he's roaring with primal thrill of victory.

Because the combatants are dinosaurs and a couple of missing-link apemen, you get to perform a caveful of outrageous attacks with names like Hornication Uppercut, Fart of Fury, Fast Power Puke, Cranium Crusher, and many more. Time Warner went the extra mile to include four-button joystick support, but as producer Ken Humphries predicted in our Scoop!, it's easier to pull off special moves with a two-button stick. Still, there are a lot of moves to master — not quite as many as in *FX Fighter*, but a goodly amount

The Dino Pro-Bowling Tour?

One of the coolest things about *Primal Rage* is the inclusion of "Easter Eggs" — extra games that are activated by secret codes. They aren't the sort of codes that you type in, like you would for *Doom*, *Dark Forces*, *Descent*, and others; these codes consist of the players performing certain actions in the middle of a game. By activating the Easter Eggs this way, two players who are in the middle of a furious bout could find themselves playing volleyball against each other — with one of the worshippers as the ball!

On the other hand, it's also possible that you could play for days or months without ever performing the series of moves that activates the games — and what fun are Easter Eggs if you never find 'em? We wouldn't want our readers to be frustrated, so here's the scoop on how to activate the hidden games in *Primal Rage*.

Volleyball

Have one player do a combo on the other, then watch for worshippers to run out and start bowing. The player closest to a bowing worshipper should hit him, causing the worshipper to fly in an arc to the other player, who then knocks the worshipper back again. Knock the worshipper back and forth ten times and a net will pop up, along with a judge on a high chair — and you and a friend get to play volleyball with a little bitty person as the ball! You play until someone scores three points, then it's back to the real game.



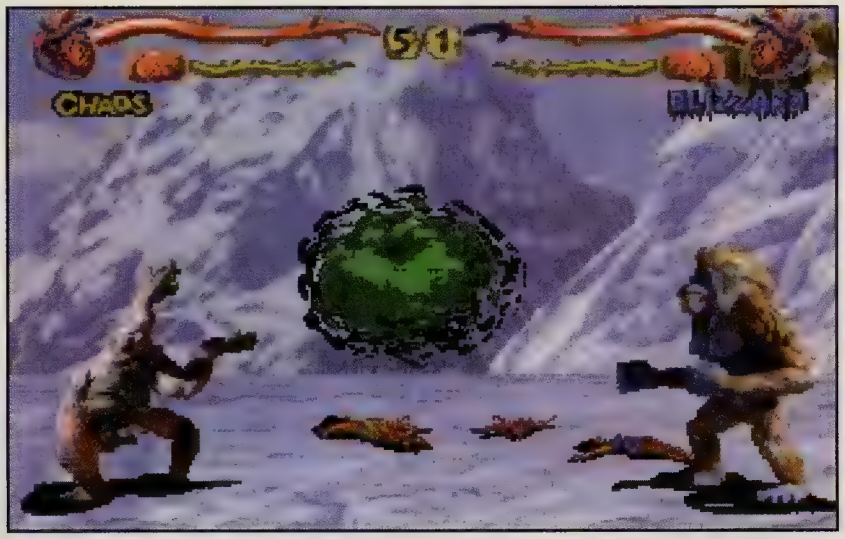
To get to the bowling stage, choose Armadon and perform the Spinning Death.

Bowling

Both players need to be Armadon to get to this game. Make the Armadons do the Spinning Death move at the same time, so that the dinos ram into each other. After three collisions, you'll see the Armadons move to the right, and ten human worshippers line up like bowling pins. You bowl two frames using the Spinning Death to knock down the puny humans.

Raining Cows

To see this one, you need to play as Chaos in the Ruins. Set up a Sudden Death match by making sure each player wins only one round apiece in the match (i.e., don't hit each other at all in the third round), then carefully time a Fart of Fury so that the green cloud is in the air as the Sudden Death round begins. You should see cows falling from the sky instead of flaming meteors. If Sudden Death occurs on Blizzard's stage, hail will pour from the sky.



Yes, folks, it's the Fart of Fury. This flatulent attack is just one of the many examples of pre-teen humor you'll find in *Primal Rage*.



Talon readies himself against a leaping attack from the gargantuan monkey-man Blizzard.

nonetheless.

There's a whole slew of options, from turning on gore (who would turn it off?) to having the program keep track of all sorts of stats like minutes played by each player, how long each round, match, and game lasted, which characters have been played (broken down into percentages), and a lot more. Stats aren't my cup of tea, but hey — it was pretty thoughtful to include them.

So *Primal Rage* is perfect, right? Well, not quite. There are three distinct versions of the game packed onto one CD, designed to run on machines equipped with 4MB, 8MB, or 16MB of RAM. While it makes perfect sense to help broaden the market of end-users, you should know that if you're running with 4MB of RAM you're going to have live with a few sour notes. While the 4MB version doesn't cut any corners on gameplay, all of the detail that went into the characters is pretty much lost. Instead what you'll find are coarse, unappealing graphics that will ruin the biggest part of *Primal Rage*'s appeal to all but the die-hard gamer.

The 8MB version is a noted improvement over the 4MB version, and steps the detail up to a nice, acceptable level. It's still not as gorgeous as the 16MB version, but fully good enough to deliver some enjoyable gaming.

As long as you've got the hardware — and especially if you've got 16MB of RAM — there's a lot to like about *Primal Rage*. In fact, it more than makes up for *Rise of the Robots*, Time Warner's disappointing first attempt at a fighting game. With its killer sound effects, graphics, and slick control options, *Primal Rage* is the next best thing to having the coin-op in your home, and a must-buy for fans of fighting games.

—Steve Poole



The humans who survived the cataclysm that awakened the gods are basically toadies — if you're a winner, they'll be glad to worship you.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Killer graphics and animation, cool soundtrack, and enough hidden moves and goodies to satisfy hard-core arcade fans.

LOWS: You need 16MB RAM and a 486/66 to see this game at its best; pulling off some of the special moves on a four-button pad is tough.

BOTTOM LINE: If you like fighting games, buy this one.

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Product Information Number 170

Silent Steel

Category: Interactive Movie

Developer: Tsunami

Publisher: Sigma Realmagic Interactive, 46501 Landing Parkway, Fremont, CA 94538 (800) 494-8848

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386/33; 4MB RAM; Windows 3.1; SVGA; Mouse; Supported sound card; Realmagic-compatible MPEG controller	486/33; 16MB RAM

M.S.R.P.: $59.95

Interactive movies are supposed to be the bane of any serious gamer, but once in a while one comes along that actually *works.*

Since the beginning of the multimedia craze, gamers have been conditioned by countless disappointing experiences to be very wary of interactive movies. But, once in a while, one comes along that just *works* for what it is. *Silent Steel* is one of those.

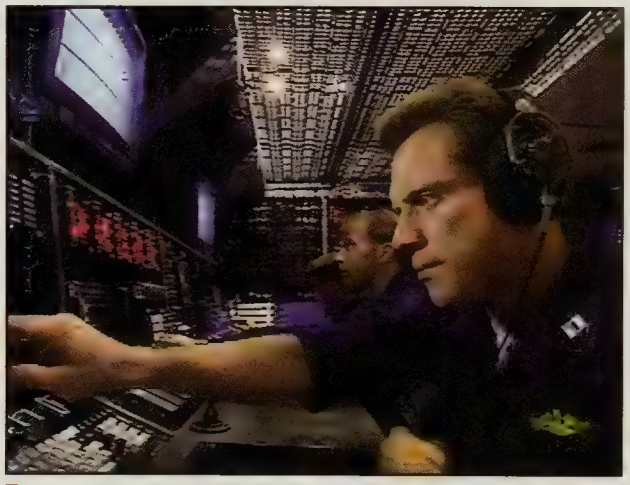
Sure, there's not much to do, and there are far fewer hours of gameplay than you'll find in other adventure games, but the overall quality of the product is far better than we've seen in other games of this type. The requirement for special MPEG hardware limits the number of users for *Silent Steel*, but if you're one of the few who have been willing to invest the money, *Silent Steel* is an entertaining story that shows some real flair. (*Editor's Note*: A non-MPEG version of *Silent Steel* is available, but its video quality is considerably lower than the Realmagic product's.)

Most of the game takes place on the *U.S.S. Idaho*, although there are scenes onboard ASW choppers, an aircraft carrier, and in enemy subs. The game puts you in the role of the commander of a nuclear submarine on patrol. A Kilo-class sub from Libya has just slipped out of the Mediterranean, and no one is sure where it is or what its intentions are. The entire game is based on video seen from your perspective as you hunt the Kilo and deal with other threats.

From the morning cup of joe to the faces of your men as they die, you see it all in full-motion, full screen video. And this is top-flight video: professionally shot, acted, and written. Filmed on an actual sub, with some stock sub footage and good special effects shots for action and underwater exteriors, this looks about as good as something you'd see on syndicated TV — about "Baywatch" or "Hercules" level — which means it's much better than most game footage.



The acting in *Silent Steel*, as well as the writing and editing, are top-notch — or at least as good as most syndicated TV shows.



Although it requires special MPEG hardware, *Silent Steel* features some of the most impressive video you'll find in a PC game.



Silent Steel's video was shot in authentic locations, like the deck of this aircraft carrier, or inside an actual submarine.

The interactive elements, which start to kick in after the first reports come in, are a bit thin. You're offered a set of options, three at a time, to react to each situation. Should you hunt the sub, stay on patrol, or contact a nearby carrier group? Each decision you make takes the action in a different direction, with — allegedly — thirty possible endings (a lot of these endings involve failure). Crew members, from your XO to the sonar operator, come and go, asking for decisions to be made, offering new pieces information, or just giving you new problems to deal with.

There are various options to choose, from dropping countermeasures, to evasion or attack, but only a handful will keep you and your crew from a watery grave. There is, however, only so much you can do with interactive video, and there's only so much video you can put on a few CD-ROMs. Play time is short and the challenges involve simple decision making. But it's still a fun, immersive experience while it lasts. You might be surprised by how entertaining it can be at times, and while it goes against all the conventional wisdom about what gamers want (complexity, replayability, challenge), it's still an entertaining yarn.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

75%

HIGHS: Excellent video (with MPEG hardware), acting, and writing make drama work well.

LOWS: Wafer-thin game elements and very little replayability.

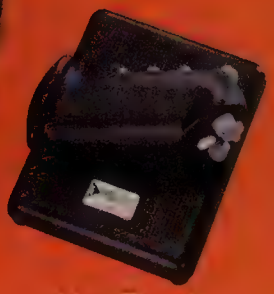
BOTTOM LINE: A surprisingly entertaining game, despite its lack of substance.

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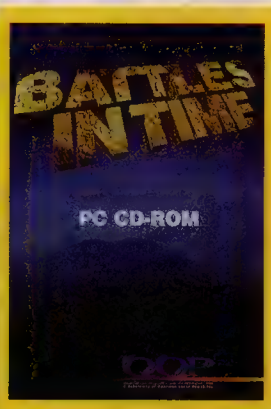
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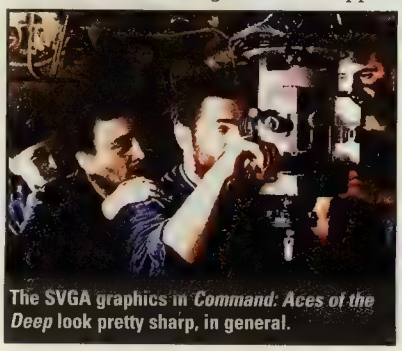
Warlords and Shouting Sub Aces

Not long ago, I had a chance to cover the expansion disk for *Aces of the Deep*, last year's U-boat sim from Sierra. It's a good set that add some new subs, missions, and theaters to an entertaining — if not terrific — game. Before that, we had the "enhanced CD-ROM" version of *AOD*, which I counted as one of the best enhanced titles I'd seen, featuring new interviews with actual U-boat aces and a very well-done online reference work.

Command: Aces of the Deep

As you might expect, the expansion disk and enhanced version have now been bundled together on a single "deluxe" CD-ROM and given a spit-and-polish with Super VGA graphics. But Dynamix decided to make things a little different with *Command: Aces of the Deep*.

Yes, the graphics are better: the SVGA really shines in some instances, though in gameplay SSI's forthcoming *Silent Hunter* still looks better. But Dynamix also realized that people would be hungry for titles native to Windows 95, so they made a full conversion of *AOD* to take advantage of it.



The SVGA graphics in *Command: Aces of the Deep* look pretty sharp, in general.

The results are mixed. I never did see the opening animations, and the game suffered some funny graphic and pallet shifts during play that I don't recall in seeing in the DOS version. I also had considerable problems with General Protection Faults that I'm still trying to track down, with help from Sierra. So the jury's still out on how well it actually runs.

The big news for *Command* is that it is the first game to use voice control for play. By that, I mean you set up your sound card and a microphone, start up the game, set a volume level, and begin shouting commands. "Come to Periscope Depth!"



"Say again, sir?" a crew member asks as you try to carefully enunciate your voice commands in *Command: Aces of the Deep*.

T. Liam McDonald



"Dive! Dive!" "Man deck gun!" and "Fire!" all perform the actions that keystrokes or mouse clicks normally would.

There are several dozen commands, including shifting stations, setting speed, bearing, and depth, calling up reports and gauges, and other functions. The technology involved is IBM's VoiceType, which was designed to control business applications and take dictation. IBM itself is using similar technology for their *The Jungle Book* game.

But how does *Command* work? Pretty well, most of the time. I was using the Sound Blaster AWE 32 microphone setup, which IBM acknowledges doesn't work too well with their system. (An IBM VoiceType microphone is recommended, though models from Radio Shack, Sennheiser, Audio Technica, Conneaut, and Electro-Voice also tested well.)

When I set the levels correctly and spoke in a clear voice a few inches from the mic, about two-thirds of my commands were recognized.

The rest of my commands resulted in a maddening "Say again, Sir?" comment from a crew member.

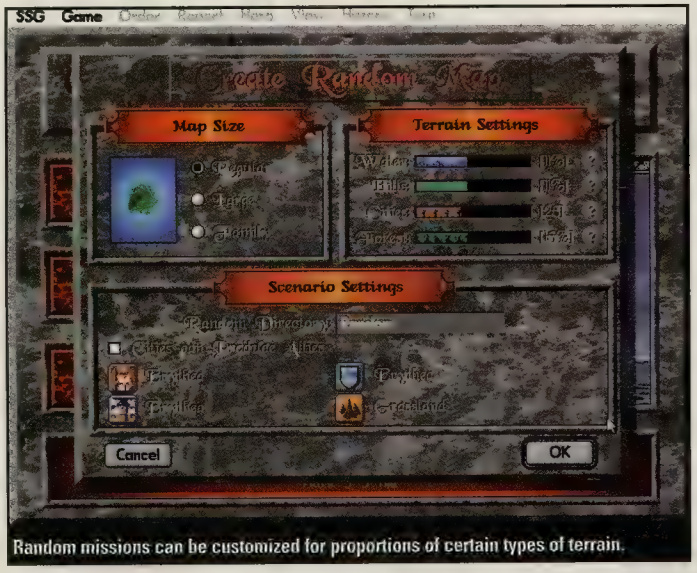
It's a promising step towards hands-free gaming, and it does seem to work fairly well. Of course, you've got to wonder what the benefit really is.

First off, you sound like an idiot, sitting there shouting at your computer. Second, haven't we *really* become couch spuds when we can't even lift our hands to move the frigging mouse three inches in either direction? The mind boggles.

The latest enhancement of *Aces of the Deep* gives Tom a good reason to yell at his computer, and a dangerously addictive wargame from Australia gets a CD-ROM facelift.

Warlords II Deluxe

Australia's SSG has a knack for creating solid, playable games that are wide-open to user tweaking. Their *Carriers at War* titles have a scenario builder that actually lets you go in and muck about with the AI routines, and while *Warlords II* didn't have this feature (as a fantasy game, it didn't really need it), there was a *Scenario*



Random missions can be customized for proportions of certain types of terrain.

Bug Patches

Patches are available on the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer* in the X:\PATCHES directory, from online sources such as the Internet, CompuServe, and America Online, and through game publishers. One good source is The Games Domain on the Internet: *http://wclrs.bham.ac.uk/GamesDomain/patches/patches.htm*. Be warned: it can be slow at times, since it gets a lot of traffic.

Dawn Patrol v.12: Includes new SVGA drivers for Trident Video Cards and an updated flight model.

Dungeon Master II: Patch deals with sound problems in both the demo and final version.

Flight Unlimited 2.0: Contains two "physics" fixes and two video fixes, as well as correcting the joystick non-detection bug, a divide overflow error when using older mouse drivers, and hat calibration on Thrustmaster and Wingman joysticks. This patch will also add total energy compensation to the Grob's variometer. *Note:* This patch does not fix the joystick miscalibration bug. They will be releasing a newer version of this patch as soon as they fix that bug.

***Lords of Midnight* Patch 1:** A general maintenance patch.

***Mechwarrior 2* joystick patches:** These don't fix *all* problems, but take care of drifting in many cases, as well as letting users have a joystick enabled and still play NetMech.

Rebel Assault v.1.8: Intended to fix "Unexpected Interrupt" errors, joystick jumpiness, problems when running on dark monitors, running sound cards set to DMA 0, and some DOS extender incompatibilities.

SimTower v.1.1: A general maintenance patch.

Sierra's *Command: Aces of the Deep* is a promising step toward hands-free gaming.

Builder released for it that had lots of power.

SSG has given *Warlords II* a bit of a facelift, bundled it with an enhanced editor and sixty new scenarios, and put it all on one CD-ROM as *Warlords II Deluxe*. There have been no huge changes made for *Warlords II Deluxe*, but the cumulative effect of countless little changes make the game feel fresh.

First off, there are the enhanced SVGA graphics. Things look better for the most part, though the stiff unit icons could have used a little more polish. The biggest change, however, comes in a new set of indoor tiles that let you build large castles, dungeons, and walled cities inside a scenario. This tile set is superbly done, and gives a whole new slant to scenarios and scenario building.

Various settings give the terrain a wide range of textures, colors, and patterns, creating more sophisticated maps. There are even fractally generated maps and something called "geomorphs," which make for an even wider range of control over the creation of tiles. It's one of the most sophisticated terrain editors I've seen.

New scenarios have been added, several of them featuring the new dungeon and cavern tile sets, and others, such as an "all babe" battle set on a female planet (and featuring such units as Grannies and Girl Scouts), show SSG's imagination and sense of the genuinely weird. With sixty scenarios and an infinite variety of user-definable and random maps and scenarios, there's a lot of play. But is it worthwhile if you already have the original? Only if you don't have the scenario editor or are really a fan of the series. This should, however, attract new gamers who never played the original or missed the expansion disk.

A little more could have been done to make the game look better (animations, better sound effects, and so on), but in the end it's the play that matters, and *Warlords II Deluxe* plays pretty sweetly.

PCG



Dungeon and cavern scenarios and tile-sets take *Warlords II Deluxe* into whole new realms.



An "all babe" scenario is probably the strangest addition that Australia's SSG made to *Warlords II Deluxe*.

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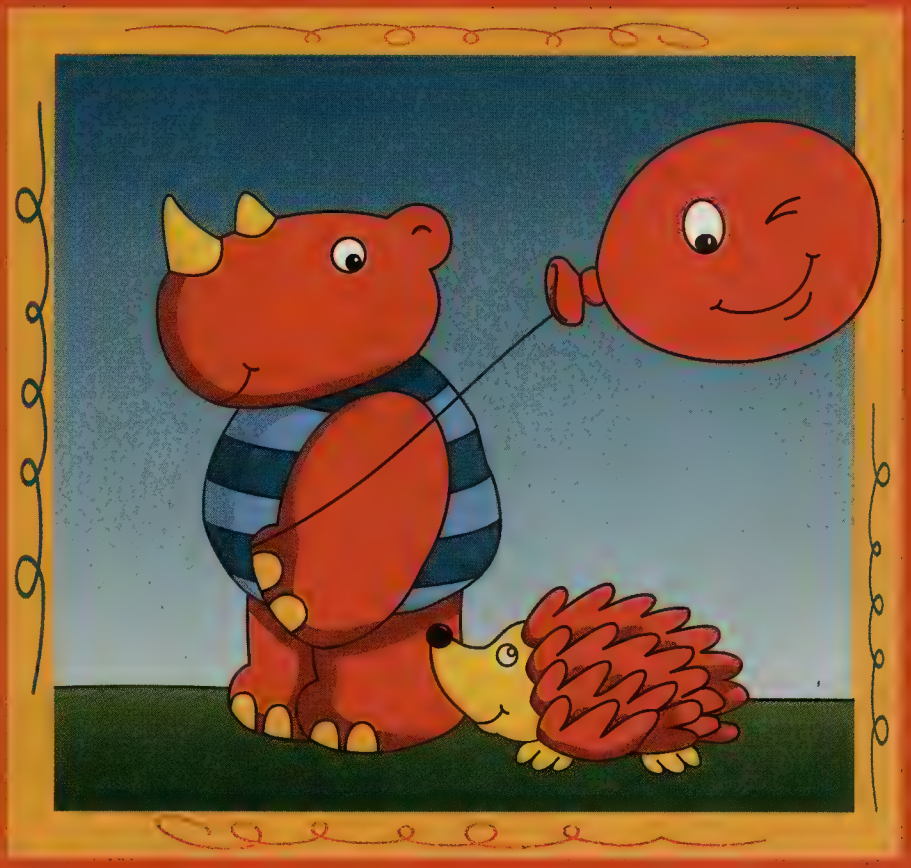
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Building Better Books

I have a love-hate relationship with electronic storybooks. In the grand universe of children's software, these programs shine among the brightest stars. Many of them are among the most inventive, the most entertaining, and the most respectful of the minds of children. They often start with excellent paper-based books, so they have a head start.

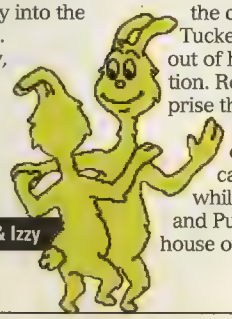
Broderbund is still the leader in this market, by my reckoning, but other companies are gaining on the front runner. Enteractive and Harper Collins Interactive have both released excellent programs recently, and in the past, I've discussed such gems as IVI's *What is a Belly Button* and Dorling Kindersley's *The Way Things Work*.

Excluding *The Way Things Work* — which was so extensively illustrated and annotated that it was almost interactive in its paper-based form — what has bothered me greatly about even the best electronic storybooks was how irrelevant the point-and-click animations were. Dancing flowers, frolicking bugs, wavering ghosts moved through scenes unnoticed by the main characters. These incidental animations rarely affected their surroundings, and served only to inject nonsense humor into stories.

Okay, injecting more humor into children's books is a noble mission. Humor engages children, enriches stories, and may convince kids to learn to read when other devices fail. I'm all for humor, really. I always wish, though, that these incidental animations would weave themselves a little more tightly into the fabric of the story.

And recently, the computer genie who visits me on rare occasions heard my desperate plea and said, "Your wish is my command." Harper Collins Interactive, Enteractive, and Broderbund have all released electronic storybooks that exploit their incidental animation beautifully, supporting the story lines and creating a sense of unity in a medium that can feel quite fragmented when five or six animations interrupt the narration of a story.

Now, if the genie would just get these companies to put some grown-up books on CD-ROM, I'd give the poor guy a vacation for a while.



Dr. Seuss' Ichabod & Izzy

Pigs

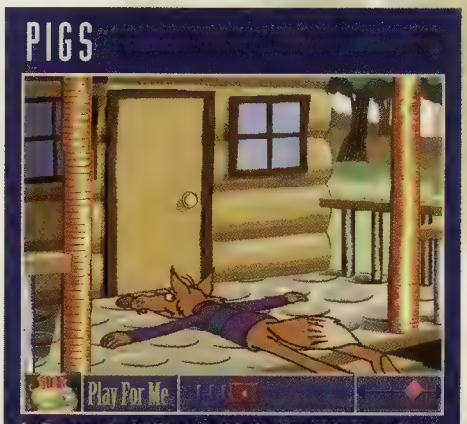
Imagine a wolf in mid-life crisis, a family of maladjusted pigs, and a variety of pathways through their lives, and you get a good idea of Enteractive's new electronic storybook, *Pigs*. Inspired by the familiar plot of the Three Little Pigs, *Pigs*' developers stomped all over the fairy tale, scraped the result off the floor, and packaged a truly amusing story that thrives on the computer.

The three little pigs, Doug, Pug, and Tucker, have lived with their parents for too long. All three are in their late twenties, and Ma and Pa Pig have had enough. Sent off into the cold, cruel world, Tucker constructs a house out of his massive coin collection. Rolls of quarters comprise the walls of the house. With a few more rolls of silver dollars, Tucker can add a patio. Meanwhile, the twins — Doug and Pug — construct their house out of scraps from old airplanes. Their expectations as homeowners fall quite short of Tucker's.

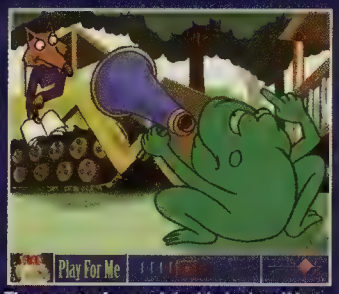
When the Big Bad Wolf comes along, he meets far more challenges than the traditional tale relates. But rest assured, the resourceful wolf is poorly rewarded for his ingenious schemes.

Rest assured, too, that *Pigs* offers as much value as any good electronic storybook should. The plot is compelling — even if it is familiar. The gags are among the funniest I've seen without nose-diving into too much tasteless slapstick. (The program features a few slapstick routines, but doesn't rely on them.) The presentation is handsome, with polished graphics, fine songs, and sharp sound effects.

Unlike other good electronic storybooks, however, *Pigs* offers the most child-guided approach to exploring a story that I've seen. Rather than presenting kids with incidental hot spots on the page — objects that dance or frolic when clicked on — *Pigs* offers children a choice of how the story will progress. For example, outside the twins' house, clicking on the wolf's hand transports kids to the costume shop where they can choose a pizza delivery suit or a United Pigs Delivery uniform for the wolf to use in his next scheme. Clicking on the wolf's mouth, on the other hand, branches off toward the wolf singing "I'm Tired of Being a Wolf."



In Enteractive's *Pigs*, the big bad wolf huffs and puffs and blows himself down, leading him to rethink his career choice.



The narrator frog and the big bad wolf battle over whether they can fit a bulldozer into the script in Enteractive's *Pigs*.



OK, OK, Heidi has finally admitted that she's a sucker for a good electronic storybook, and this month she tells us about three terrific new ones she has discovered.

followed by his decision to stop chasing pigs for good. Children's choices seem to affect the course of the story far more profoundly than in other electronic storybooks.

Carving out a small niche for itself, *Pigs* is significantly distinct in style and operation. But in its departure from the norm, it meets the high standards set by Living Books and other fine programs.

George Shrinks

Whether it's the triumph of the tiny or the weirdness of the wee ones, kids have devoured stories of mighty munchkins like petit fours at a wedding reception. In this vein, *George Shrinks* — a fine picture book by William Joyce — has been turbo-charged by Harper Collins Interactive. This CD-ROM-based program spins the tale of George, who suddenly finds himself knee-high to a frog.

After climbing out from under his covers, the thumb-sized George finds a note that his mother and father have left for him. It instructs him to make his bed, brush his teeth, wake his brother, and so on. Each task on the list would seem quite ordinary for a boy of three feet or so, but for miniature George, these jobs present perplexing challenges as well as amusing possibilities. He skis down the dirty dishes on a sponge; he sails his toy boat in the bathtub; and he scuba dives in the goldfish bowl. Being small looks like fun through most of the book.

However, the pet cat lurks around corners, under beds, and outside in the weeds. In his tiny condition, George looks like breakfast to the feline fiend, and the finale features a fine final conflict.

Besides the story-based animation, incidental objects offer entertaining antics, too. For example, just about every water faucet pours forth some odd item — a troop of wooden soldiers with parachutes, perhaps, or a gorilla. A toy rocket and a miniature space figure show up on every page, blasting out of a bag of trash, zooming through the branches of the trees, whizzing from behind the chocolate cake that George chooses as a healthy breakfast. Though not every animation is closely tied to the story line, the rocket offers a strong sense of unity to the program.

Like no other paper-based book I've ever seen, *George Shrinks* begs to be animated. Nearly every line of the story is an imperative sentence, directing George to do this task or that one. In many other books, pictures are merely scenes, showing what has happened and in what condition the action leaves the characters. In George's story, the pictures teeter on the verge of change, and on the computer, kids see the imminent change occur. The animations are beautifully integrated with the text.

Unlike *Pigs*, *George Shrinks* was a final version, so I was sorry to see some strange glitches in the animation. Whole fish disappeared and reappeared even when I clicked on some other part of the screen, for example. These were minor problems, but they gave a rough edge to an otherwise polished program. Perhaps Windows 95 was the culprit rather than George — or maybe that rocket got loose in my CPU.

Dr. Seuss's ABC

Unlike *George Shrinks*, *Dr. Seuss's ABC* seems a poor candidate for CD-ROM. The pages are sparsely illustrated with just enough pictures to support a rhyme or two for each letter. However, with this product, like the other two, the interactive version proves the value of electronic storybooks.



Throughout the book, Ichabod and Izzy dance across the pages. For example, on the "I" page, they scratch their backs against the floor, the wall, and even an odd back-scratching contraption — after all, "Ichabod is itchy," says Izzy, "and so am I." These two friendly tour guides offer at least one extra rhyme whenever they appear, and other characters deliver still more almost musically lyrical couplets and such. Besides the itchy "I" page, others feature a sax-blowing Nixie Nox on the "X" page and the ever-gracious Zizzer Zazzer Zuzz on the "Z" page.



Dr. Seuss's ABC retains all the charm and cleverness from the paper-based book, and the added text follows suit. Some of these new passages come from other Dr. Seuss books. The yellow Zed who darts from one page to another is introduced by a passage from *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*. Dr. Seuss fans will find it strangely familiar, but Zed's a welcome guest as he helps Ichabod and Izzy draw the pages together.

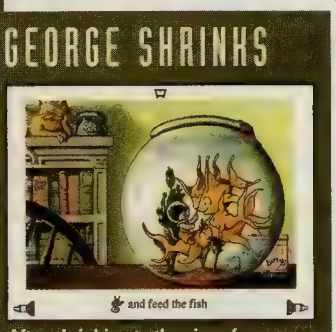
Unlike the first two electronic storybooks already discussed, *Dr. Seuss's ABC* has a much clearer educational mission, sprouting from the paper-based book's focus on letter recognition and phonics. But this focus on letter sounds has helped Broderbund produce incidental animations that are tightly bound to the book's content. No random, meaningless dancing daisies in this program. Each mouse-click activates a sequence that reinforces the main thread of the book.

I like this evolution of the electronic storybook genre. I want the animations to be vital to the story. Even those small items in the background should somehow relate to and be regarded by the characters because each relationship would offer more for parents and kids to talk and think about. It's hard to believe, though, that all subsequent Living Books will continue down this evolutionary trail — I'm sure the next book in the Arthur series will return to the entertaining, but often barely relevant, animations that characterize most electronic storybooks. And my child will turn to me and say "So what? I *like* it when the flowers dance. Who cares if the other characters aren't paying attention?"

PCG



As George rides his brother like a great elephant, a rocket bursts through a bag of trash. It's the same rocket that flew out of a faucet in one room and zoomed around a chocolate cake in another.



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Product Information Number 123

And a Cartridge in a Bare Tree...

What? It's December already?! But I haven't even dusted off my Indiana Jones Halloween costume yet! (Indy may be old news, but you wouldn't believe what a babe-magnet the bullwhip is at parties). Well, since it *is* the holiday season, here's a whole grab-bag of digital delights. Merry Crimble and all that...

Online mags

There are already a few very slick commercial gaming sites available on the Web, and it's nice to see some decent amateur efforts springing up as well. Two that have come to my attention recently are *PC Multimedia & Entertainment* and *Titania* magazines.

PCM&E, edited by Michael Bendner and Rod White, started out a bit sloppily as a DOS-based text reader (with SVGA screenshots), and while its format is still basically the same, the second issue has already shown marked improvement. *PCM&E*, which features news, game hints, hardware and software reviews, and interviews with major industry players, can be found on the Web at *http://www.mortimer.com/users/pcme/pcme.htm* (note that those last letters are HTM, not the usual HTML).

Titania magazine, created by Martin A. Kozicki, was only available in beta form at press time as a series of Windows Write pages, but it looks elegant and very promising. The Web site, which should be up by mid-October, will feature news, game reviews, strategy tips, columns, contests and its own ftp site — all based on a friendly, SVGA graphical interface. The URL is *http://www.titania-pub.com*.

Walk on the Web Side

Canadian TV's "The Red Green Show," a wry and amusing combination of SCTV's Fishin' Musician and every hunting/fishing/building show you've ever seen, is just entering its fifth season (now on PBS as "The New Red Green Show"), and it has its own Web site. Drop by the Possum Lodge at *http://www.redgreen.com* for show info and highly fashionable Red Green merchandise.

Calana Software guru and *PCG* reader Ed "Doogie" Bowser turned me on to the Bob & Tom Web site, *http://www.iquest.net/bobandtom*, based on the long-running adventures of Indiana radio WFBQ's immensely popular morning team. All kindsa wacky stuff here, including sound bytes and lyrics from Tom's parody band, The Electric Amish.

If the inconceivable popularity of simp-rockers like Michael Bolton and Kenny G, not to mention the lifeless Concert for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, hasn't convinced you that rock is deader than ever, head on over to *http://www.weber.u.washington.edu/jlks/pike/DeathRR.html*, for an in-depth look at where most of the *real* rockers are today (hint: they're dead).

"C|Net Central" has its live Studio-Cam up at *http://www.cnet.com/Masthead/bigbro.html*, and they also recommend the Spy Cameras at *http://ciips.ee.uwa.edu.au/williams/Student/spy.html* — where you can watch some Australian university students being ... uhh ... student-like.

America Online has just added *The Weekly World News*, the supermarket tabloid from the planet Zontar, to its online magazine stand. Yes, the true-life hallucinations of Eddie Clontz and his bizarre staff are on digital display for Bigfoot Buffs, Elvis Obsessives and UFOriacs.

Smells a Bit Gamey...

Crack dot Com's *Abuse* hit the Net August 31 — right on schedule and much to the delight of shareware gamers everywhere — and custom levels are already popping up, courtesy of the game's built-in editor (which doubles as a cheat utility). Let me know if you find any really good ones. (And check out *Abuse* on this month's CD.)

Once again, I've been suckered by another simple-but-addictive shareware game: BreakFree is a first-person perspective *Breakout* clone by Software Storm. It's been around for a while, so it shouldn't be hard to find BRKFRE10.ZIP on AOL, CompuServe or your favorite BBS.

I've just been assigned a DWANGO account (The Dialup Wide-Area Network Game Organization) so watch out — that tap on your shoulder in *Doom*, *Doom II*, *Heretic* or *Terminal Velocity* might just be me. Then again, I'm still a Keyboard *Doomer*, so maybe not.

Another *PCG* reader, Andrew Wagster, has turned me on to ZZT — an ANSI game system made by Epic MegaGames way back when. You control one of those little smiley faces as you move around the boards completing tasks and shooting monsters. What attracts many people to ZZT is the ability to create fairly decent games with just a few days training in the ZZT-OOP language.

Once you've downloaded ZZT31.ZIP from your favorite BBS, the Wagster recommends the episodes titled "CowQuest 4," "Island of Jerks 4," "Castle ZaZoomda," and "Code Red." I opted for more familiar titles based on Calvin & Hobbes, The Tick, Aliens, "The X-Files" and "Mystery Science Theater 3000." The sound and graphics are truly awful, but a well-designed ZZT game will take you back to the days when gameplay wasn't overshadowed by flashy video and animation.

And, finally, leave it to comedienne Jenean Garafolo to come up with a 1990s equivalent of Mark Twain's famous "the rumor of my death was an exaggeration" line. She recently dispelled a rumor about her own bad self with the tag, "... contrary to the Internet."

The times, they are a-changin'. Be seeing you.

PCG

Scott Wolf



The holidays are here, and our friendly online elf has filled his sleigh with some fun Web sites you can visit. Just keep him away from the egg nog, please.

Microsoft's Slick SideWinder



Microsoft's SideWinder 3D Pro is a cutting-edge joystick that does it all for a surprisingly low price: It's only $59.95.

PC gaming is like any other hobby; the better your tools are, the more fun you're going to have.

Of course, the biggest improvement you can make to your gaming toolkit is to buy a hot new system — a Pentium 133 with 16MB RAM, for instance. It's also the most expensive improvement, but at least you can kid yourself you're buying it for practical reasons, like making your word processor and spreadsheet run faster and more efficiently.

But the smaller improvements are a different matter. You don't need a joystick to write a letter, and a great new speaker system doesn't have a thing to do with compiling a spreadsheet. When you're ready to accessorize, you've got to bite the bullet and admit you're spending the cash for the *real* reason you own a PC — gaming.

That's when it's good to find add-ons that give you a lot of bang for your buck. And this month, I've been playing with a gadget that really fits the bill: Microsoft's SideWinder 3D Pro.

You've got to hand it to Bill Gates and Co.; they don't often jump into the peripheral business, but when they do, they jump in with both feet and do it right. There's the Microsoft Mouse, the reigning king of pointing devices, which gets better every year; the Natural Keyboard, ergonomically designed and more solidly built than anything short of IBM's classic Professional keyboard; and now there's the 3D Pro.

First and foremost, the 3D Pro is a digital joystick. But that doesn't mean it's one of those all-or-nothing affairs, like most videogame controllers. It has all the functionality of a standard analog joystick, which means you can move the stick a small distance to input a little change of direction, or a large distance for a big change. That fine degree of control is something a lot of PC gamers wouldn't want to give up, even for the increased reliability and responsiveness of a digital stick, so it's good to see that Microsoft hasn't thrown it out.

Unlike most PC joysticks, the 3D Pro doesn't measure input with mechanical potentiometers (the same variable resistors used as volume controls in older radios and TV sets). Instead, it has optical circuitry, using tiny infrared "cameras," like those found in most mice and trackballs, to detect joystick movement.



Dan Bennett

With fewer moving parts than the average stick, the 3D Pro is almost certain to be more reliable, and since it can measure joystick movement to within a tenth of a millimeter, it's bound to be more accurate.

Will this new-fangled digital joystick work with games written to support old-fashioned analog sticks? Sure. Any existing game that includes joystick support will automatically "see" the 3D Pro as an analog controller with four buttons, side-to-side rotation for "rudder" control, and a throttle slider and/or four-way "hat" switch. In fact, you can have Microsoft's joystick act exactly like a Thrustmaster Flight Control System or a CH Products Flightstick Pro; a switch on the stick's wide, stable base lets you choose between the two. It's a real no-compromise solution.

But the new stick *really* shines under Windows 95 (or in select DOS games written to fully support the 3D Pro in its native digital mode). That's where you get an *eight*-button joystick with an *eight*-way "hat" switch, a throttle, and rudder control.

On top of that, the 3D Pro's digital technology makes it much more responsive and chews up less of your computer's horsepower than an analog interface. The techie-types could explain this better, I'm sure, but as I understand it, your computer's processor has to continuously check on an analog joystick, sending signals to it and waiting for them to return before it knows if the stick has moved. A digital stick like the 3D Pro simply sends data to the computer when the stick's position changes, and it can send those packets as much as three times faster than an analog joystick's "call-and-response" process.

The important point is that a digital interface lets your computer concentrate on things other than scanning the joystick. Conventional wisdom says a PC spends around 12 percent of its time talking to an analog joystick, so we're not talking about a huge increase in performance — but every little bit counts.

All that technical stuff is great, of course, but the fanciest joystick in the world is a waste of money if it feels flimsy or isn't comfortable to use. But the 3D Pro feels terrific; as good as any joystick on the market, and better than most. The 3D Pro joins the Logitech Wingman Extreme and the Suncom Eagle series in the ranks of the most solidly built joysticks you can buy.

The greatest thing about the 3D Pro is its price. Microsoft says its new joystick should be available for about $59.95, which makes it cheaper than many sticks with fewer features. It'll also be available in a bundle with *Mechwarrior 2* for around $79.95, which is a heck of a deal if you don't already have Activision's excellent robot-battling game. Finally, there's the SideWinder 3D Pro's little brother, known simply as the SideWinder, a two-button analog joystick priced around $29.95.

The *second* greatest thing about the SideWinder 3D Pro is that it didn't have to be nearly this good. Let's face it: Microsoft could've slapped its name on an inferior stick and still sold a ton of 'em. But they didn't enter the joystick market as a sideline; the 3D Pro is a classy product that can easily hold its own with the leaders in the field.

Windows 95 isn't the only exciting thing to come out of Redmond in recent months; the software giant's new joystick is an innovative, versatile thing of beauty.

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Brains or Bitmaps?

With every new roleplaying game that ships, we receive a barrage of hype that boldly announces the huge advances being made with this particular product. But what is really moving forward?

There have been improvements in graphics: obviously as far as looks go, *World of Xeen* is far superior to the original *Wizardry*. The interfaces have changed: the Ultima series from Origin has evolved from a single-character, icon-based game to a multi-character icon-based game to a single-character arcade-style game.

The step-by-step first-person perspectives of *Wizardry*, *Might and Magic*, and *The Bard's Tale* were supplanted by the smooth-scrolling first-person perspectives found in *Ultima Underworld*, *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* and *Betrayal at Krondor*.

Story lines have had slight variations, new sound effects have been added, etc., but just about all of these changes have been superficial ones. The essence of roleplaying, the interaction with other players, has consistently eluded most computer RPG developers.

We've already talked about advances being made in online roleplaying, and this is without a doubt the easiest way to recreate the experience of pen-and-paper roleplaying on a PC. But not everyone has access to a modem; online services can be rather expensive (especially when considering the length of most RPGs); and, most importantly, you're unable to interact with the same people every time you play unless you all agree to a strict schedule. If you want a long-term, campaign-style adventure with real (or realistic) people, and you want to be able to pick up and play at a moment's notice, there just aren't many options available.

OK, I'll admit, this may not seem like such a big deal — after all, running one of the current computer RPGs can be a lot more pleasant than inviting a large group of people with dice and rule books into your home. But those same people are the ones who add the human element to gaming, that unknown factor that ensures each game will be something very different and separate from any other game you've played before.

Trent C. Ward



The characters in your average CRPG are about as entertaining to talk to as one of the animatronic robots at Disney World. You talk to them, they respond with the canned answer they've been programmed to give, and thus ends your exciting exchange. In a fight, you can almost always be sure any fighters in your team not under your control will attack the enemy with every resource at their command, and either fall fighting, or run away when their hit points drop below a predetermined level. There's really little chance of one character being a little bit nervous because it's dark, and running away for no good reason; and there's little chance of running into a creature that remembers your past actions in combat and responds accordingly.

With all of the advances that have come in computer RPGs (graphics, sound, and sheer size), very little work has been done on trying to reproduce the most important element of roleplaying: player interaction. No amount of crisp graphics will keep a roleplaying game fresh if it is little more than an endless series of hack-and-slash battles. While modems solve some of the problem by letting us interact with other humans, it's still pretty obvious that better artificial intelligence for computerized characters is badly needed.

Fortunately, progress is being made — and oddly enough, it's coming from a company best known for strategy and action games.

> Over the years, computer roleplaying games have advanced by leaps and bounds in just about every area — except in the most important one.

Peter Molyneux, founder of Bullfrog, has always been interested in the problems of artificial intelligence, but in his latest release, *Dungeon Keeper*, he may have stumbled over the very thing that could resurrect the stagnant CRPG industry.

"What we're trying to simulate is what a player would do," Molyneux says. "For example, in *Dungeon Keeper*, each character now has the major senses that a player would have. So each of these AI characters can see, hear, and even smell. They can realize when they are in danger and threat, and they can feel frightened."

The idea of interacting with a computer character with the same kinds of motivations you have is very compelling, and opens up whole new concepts for better RPGs. Instead of a computerized fighter who exists merely as a set of stats that report his physical attributes in a fight, the combat system also could have access to the character's emotional stats as well — not just how likely the character is to run away from a losing fight, but the type of things that cause actual fear in the character.

By creating a basic set of rules for a computer character, then setting them up with a huge set of variables that affect them, you can end up with events that even the programmers may not have expected. This random element, the presentation of a character that may act unreasonably in a given situation, is the spark that makes playing RPGs with dice, paper, and people so much more intriguing than wandering through a ghost town of cardboard cutout merchants and guards.

The *Dungeon Keeper* approach is not going to solve all of the problems in RPGs, but Bullfrog has opened up a doorway that smart developers are going to enter at their first opportunity. Instead of spending still more time and money on improving graphics in a fantasy world, programmers need to concentrate on the true value of RPG worlds: real interaction.

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Product Information Number 113

Avalon Hill: On the Ropes or On a Roll?

William R. Trotter



Wargaming without the presence of Avalon Hill would be like the Catholic Church without the Pope. Unthinkable. Dire. A dreadful come-to-pass. It was Avalon Hill, 35 years ago, that created modern wargaming, and its classic board games defined conventions and traditions that are still very much alive.

But if you've been reading the online gaming forums recently, you've probably seen all manner of rumors and grim predictions: the company was penniless/filing for bankruptcy/desperately seeking a buyer, etc. Much of what was posted was contradictory, and some of it was clearly a matter of personal ax-grinding. So just what the hell is going on?

I've spent most of the past week talking to some of the principle players in the Avalon Hill saga, past and present, trying to get an answer to that question. The report that follows is at least reasonably accurate and is as up-to-date as the *PC Gamer* printing schedule will allow:

The brouhaha began when an article appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* on August 3, 1995. Although the financial data referred to the total corporate entity "Monarch-Avalon Hill," the tone of the piece led most informed readers to conclude that the losses and cash-flow problems were those of the game company alone.

Few people outside of Baltimore realize that Monarch-Avalon Hill comprises not only a game publisher, but also a printing company (Monarch, which acquired AH back in 1963, after four years of printing their board games), and a magazine entitled *Girls' Life*.

Most of the million-dollar negative cash-flow reported in the newspaper article came from the cost of launching the magazine — a high-quality title, by the way — and of trying to crank up its circulation faster than the marketplace would allow. Another $200,000 was spent to upgrade Monarch's printing equipment.

None of this, mind you, had anything directly to do with the Computer Games Division, but the gaming industry grapevine being what it is, reprints of the *Sun* piece were all over America within 24 hours, and Avalon Hill was deluged by calls from nervous software developers.

An Avalon Hill spokesman told me essentially what he told the agitated callers: "This company is not for sale except in the sense that any publicly-traded company is always for sale, if the price and conditions are right. Monarch-Avalon has more than a million dollars in the bank — we are certainly open to venture-capital opportunities, but we are not going out of business, filing for bankruptcy, or holding a fire sale of our games."



Based on the popular AH board game of the same name, *1830* is an economic sim that takes a unique approach.

Other observers report that Monarch-Avalon has already had several corporate suitors, all of whom have pulled out because they mainly wanted to acquire the library of viable game titles, while Monarch wanted to unload all the dead, warehoused inventory as part of the deal. As one former AH executive told me: "They're still paying money, every month, to warehouse 75,000 copies of a James Bond game that's been out of print for eight years."

One major source of "viable titles" for AH has been Atomic Games. Coincidentally or not, that often-strained relationship seems to have been terminated at about the same time Monarch began having cash-flow problems.

Atomic Games' Keith Zabalaoui told the me: "I want to stress that it's nothing personal. I like those guys, and we will still be working with them to promote and support existing products."

But the long-awaited *Beyond Squad Leader* will not be released through Avalon Hill. In fact, if and when the game does appear, it will no longer be *Beyond Squad Leader*, since AH owns the copyright to the title.

"I can't say at this point what the game will be called, although I personally like *Close Combat*," said Zabalaoui. "A major software publisher — and I do mean major — is very interested in acquiring the rights to that game. I hope we'll be able to make a dramatic announce-



***5th Fleet*, a naval warfare simulation, is an elegant conversion of the board-game classic.**

This month, General Bill tries to get a handle on a controversy that's been rocking the wargame world to its foundations: Just what the heck is going on with Avalon Hill?



D-Day: America Invades is an Atomic Games-Avalon Hill title that vividly recreates the fierce Normady campaign, with all its intriguing might-have-beens.

Avalon Hill's parent company has had rocky times, and AH itself has been affected.

ment about this within the near future...."

Jim Rose, who was hired to revive Avalon Hill's decrepit reputation as a computer game publisher, mused about the nature of the company: "It was a conservative, leisurely, old-boy kind of place, without a whole lot of urgency to its day-to-day activities. I killed myself for two years trying to rehabilitate their reputation, getting good developers lined up and good games into the pipeline.

"But it was as though they just weren't interested in making the computer game division a really big success," Rose said. "The print-runs of even our best games, for example, were absurdly small, because the gentlemen who own Monarch had a phobia about returns. For a while there was even a plan to get out of retail distribution altogether and go to mail-order only. I fought that tooth and nail."

For Rose, the last straw was Monarch's decision to venture into magazine publishing — a notoriously easy way to lose big money fast.

"They got on a printing schedule that required a circulation of 150,000 just to attract the ad money they needed to keep going. The magazine was the owners' pet project, so they kept sinking money into it."

While the magazine was sucking money, things were indeed looking up for the computer game division — the new games were getting good reviews, the Avalon Hill name once more commanded respect, there were great opportunities.

"We needed more people and resources to keep the momentum going," Rose said, "but because of that damned magazine, they started pinching pennies and taking away my authority. I thought maybe we should be rewarded for all that we'd accomplished in two short years, but the situation only got worse.

"I was running the media relations, acting as producer for all those games — and if they'd given me the power and money to do what needed doing, *Beyond Squad Leader* would be out by now. The more success we achieved, the less we had to work with, until finally, all I was doing, in essence, was packaging and shipping the damned games. At that point, I figured, what the hell, I can do that for myself, so I left and opened TalonSoft. Incidentally, I get my games printed and boxed for about half of what Monarch charges its own subsidiary, Avalon Hill."

Avalon Hill, for its part, doesn't mind being labeled "conservative," and spokesman Bill Levay states the matter very plainly: "We certainly are conservative, but we're also debt-free, and we have a cash cushion in the bank that many companies would find enviable. The game company has always at least paid for itself, and the PC division has been in the black for almost two years."

Even some of Avalon Hill's most disillusioned critics told me that Levay has done "a good job" keeping the computer games division on track, despite the furor caused by the *Baltimore Sun* article and the rumor-fest it triggered within the industry. "I can understand why that article made people nervous, said Levay, "because it was written from the point of view of the game company, and that is what Avalon Hill is famous for being. But if you read the details, you could see that the money problems were not caused by the game operation at all."

Certainly Levay is confident and optimistic about the future of Avalon Hill.

"Our situation is really pretty good," he said, "and we have a full slate of first-rate games lined up for the season, starting with *Advanced Civilization*, followed by *Over the Reich* and, in November, a really gorgeous-looking version of *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*. In the medium future, there'll be *Panzer Blitz* and *History of the World*. We'll also be issuing a full line of new board games — although the handwriting is clearly on the wall where board games are concerned. They still generate a respectable cost-profit ratio, so we'll keep publishing them."

What conclusion did I reach from these interviews? That Avalon Hill's parent company has had some rocky times this summer, due to its venture into the treacherous shoals of magazine publishing, and that AH itself has been affected — indeed, buffeted — by the fallout.

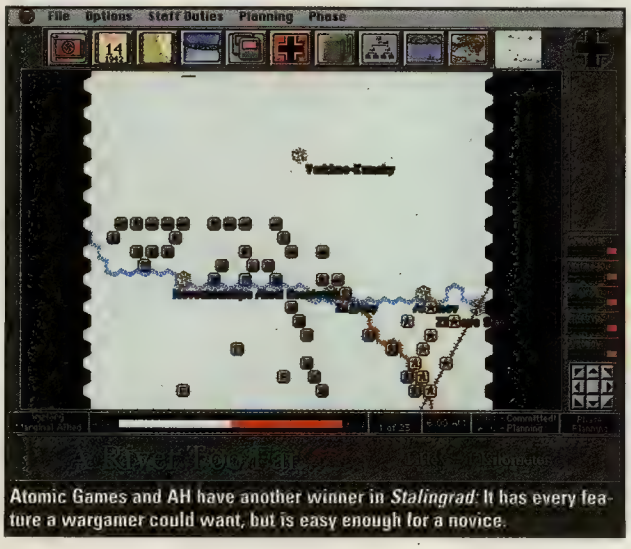
But it has not laid off personnel, no projects have been suspended (other than *Beyond Squad Leader*), and it hasn't missed any deadlines (except for the PC version of *Third Reich*, which is still having teething pains with its AI).

AH may, of course, get bought by a larger corporation (and, considering how some of Monarch's policies have affected things, a new owner might be a Godsend for AH). But it would still be Avalon Hill.

It isn't dead.

That's good news for wargamers everywhere, and for this columnist — whose emotional attachment to Avalon Hill dates back more than thirty years — an enormous relief.

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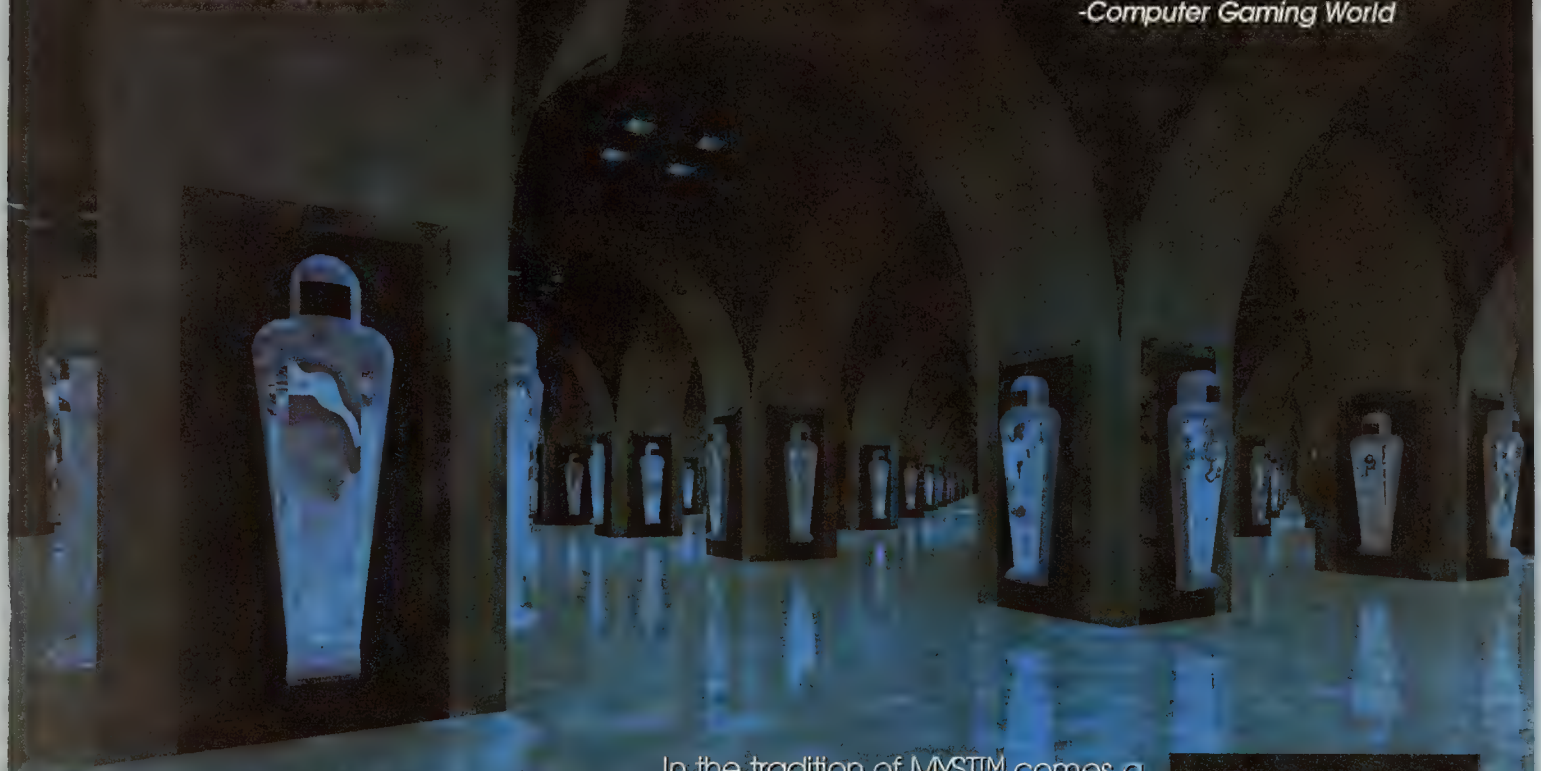


Atomic Games and AH have another winner in *Stalingrad*: It has every feature a wargamer could want, but is easy enough for a novice.

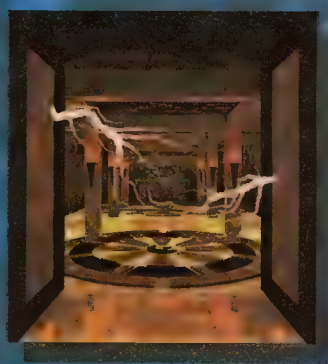
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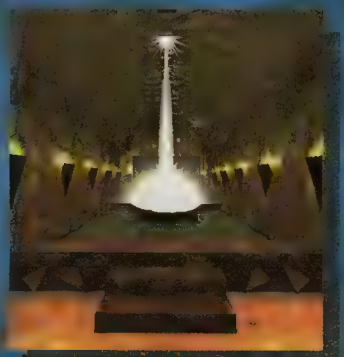
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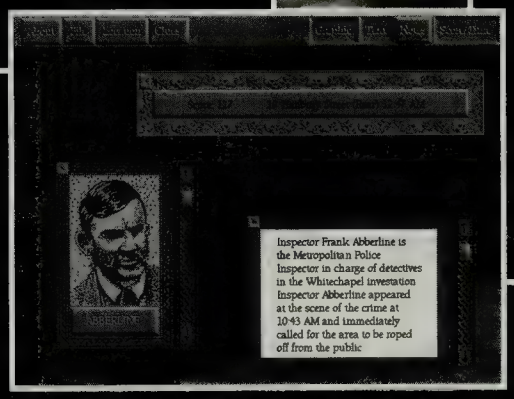
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Product Information Number 141

High Flying and Hard Driving

For all you jet fighter jockeys with itchy trigger fingers, 1996 looks like a banner year. The flight sim scene has been pretty quiet this year — too quiet. But that's about to change.

The computer skies have been far too friendly for most air combat fans. Sure, civilian pilots have been busy enough, pulling stunts in *Flight Unlimited*, or navigating from Topeka to Peoria to Los Angeles in the newest version of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*.

But for the combat crowd, *U.S. Navy Fighters* has been about the only game in town this year. And a fine sim it is, probably the best simulation of modern air combat to date. But the "guns guns guns!" folks are never satisfied.

Take heart, fly boys: the wild blue yonder is about to heat up. Jane's Combat Simulations, the new line from Electronic Arts and Origin, is set to take off with its two titles by the end of this year. *AH-64D Longbow* and *Advanced Tactical Fighters* (a.k.a. *Superfighters*) will put you in the cockpits of attack helicopters and an assortment of jet aircraft. And with the Jane's name on the box, I'm betting the emphasis will be on realism. Bring 'em on. (*Editor's Note*: For more on these sims, check out our cover feature story in the September issue of *PC Gamer*.)

Also in the works is a pair of F-16 simulations, including perhaps the most eagerly-awaited air combat sim ever, the new version of *Falcon* from Spectrum HoloByte. *Falcon*, the mother of all combat flight sims, is getting a complete facelift that will include different multi-player options and real-time combat on the ground. With *Falcon*'s ace combat record behind it, the new sim figures to be a sure winner.

Falcon 4.0 is still firmly in development, but it won't be the only F-16 game in town. Interactive Magic is readying an F-16 simulation of its own, and the I-Magic contender will almost surely beat the Spectrum HoloByte game to store shelves. *Falcon*'s place of honor among flight-sim fans is too secure for Spectrum HoloByte to feel threatened by this new jet on the block, but I-Magic's brief track record — including the outstanding *Apache* helicopter sim, designed by the same group of programmers now tackling the F-16 — should give flight simmers plenty of reason to be excited.

If you prefer your high-speed thrills on the ground, you've got some hot asphalt action coming your way this Christmas. Spectrum HoloByte's *Grand Prix II* and Papyrus' *IndyCar Racing II* promise to crank up the red-hot racing sim market a few notches. A couple of years ago, there was nothing for us race fans, but pretty soon, we'll have more quality sims than we'll know what to do with. Heck, I'll have to quit my day job.

Grand Prix II, the follow-up to MicroProse's *World Circuit*, is the first title in what Spectrum describes as a new brand, called World Circuit Racing. *Grand Prix II* will be followed by MicroProse's *Grand Prix Manager*, a Windows sim that puts you on the management side of racing.

But the only management you'll be doing in *Grand Prix II* is managing to race your way to the Formula One driving championship. You'll get all 16 circuits from the 1994 season, along with the real circuit drivers. The graphics I've seen are amazingly detailed, with texture-mapping and light-sourcing lending a you-are-there realism to billboards, buildings, cars, and sponsors. I can't wait to run through the streets of Monaco.

The second World Circuit Racing title, *Grand Prix Manager*, is a sim that puts you in a suit, negotiating with drivers, testing engines, attracting sponsors, and calling the shots trackside as your team runs for the championship. Licensed by the Formula One governing body, *Grand Prix Manager* will have you building cars from the ground up, designing and testing engines, brakes, chassis, and suspension systems.

Speaking of intense racing action, I've spent a few nights — and lots of long-distance charges — rubbing fenders with beta testers on the Papyrus multi-player racing network. It's still in the fine-tuning stages, but it's close. And man, it's a blast.

Yeah, I rolled into Atlanta like a gunfighter, sizing up the competition. I can blow the doors off the computer-controlled cars with consistent laps in the 177-178 mph range, so I figured I'd run up front with no problem. Think again, sim-column-dude! I think you might see some of these guys on the real Winston Cup circuit next year, running with Earnhardt and Gordon. The pole speed was over 183 mph. I struggled to hold onto third place for most of the race, then smacked into the concrete with a couple of laps to go. I finished seventh, but no matter.

I battled with these good ol' boys at Talladega, Charlotte, Michigan, Rockingham, Dover, and Martinsville. And every moment was a thrill like I've never experienced sitting at the computer. Sure, things get out of hand, with over-eager drivers running you into the wall and triggering massive wrecks. And tempers flare, and accusations fly. Chat mode lets you cuss-out the guy who just wrecked you, or apologize for taking the leader out of the race. But it's all in good fun.

There's just one thing I don't understand. How the hell do these guys type while they drive? "Nice move, Bob," some guy will say after Bob roars by at 190 mph in Michigan. How can you outrun a guy who can type and race at the same time?

PCG


Lee Buchanan

With just a couple of notable exceptions, 1995 has been a slow year for sim fans. But things are looking up, with new sims from EA, MicroProse, I-Magic, and others.

At the Digital Movies

Not too long ago, we were all mightily impressed to find a game that used all the available space on a CD-ROM. But since the release of *Under a Killing Moon* on four CD-ROMs, it seems that one disc just isn't enough any longer. Other members of the multi-CD club include *Wing Commander III* and *Buried in Time*, with four and three discs respectively. But Sierra's *Phantasmagoria* is the reigning heavyweight champ, with seven discs. These games need all those discs for one and the same reason: full-motion digital video.

Digital video looks impressive, but it's hardly economical. Getting good-looking video means pulling data off the disc as quickly as possible, at a rate of 300 kilobytes per second from a double-speed drive — the current standard. But at this data rate, one disc only holds 37 minutes worth of video, and we expect a decent game to last a lot longer than that.

So far, all the popular video-based PC games use some kind of software video system. This means that the PC's central processor does all the work of decoding and displaying every frame of the video. One way to pack more video on a disc — and better-looking video, at that — is to use MPEG, an open worldwide standard for digital video that's named for the Motion Picture Experts Group that designed it. MPEG's sophisticated video compression algorithms deliver video that's pretty darn close to what you'd expect from a VCR while sipping data at the modest rate of 150KB per second.

There's a catch, of course. To play high-quality MPEG video reliably, your PC needs special MPEG decoding hardware like a Sigma Designs' RealMagic card or Creative Labs' Video Blaster MP400. An MPEG card bears almost all the burden of video playback, decompressing the audio and video data streams and rescaling each image from MPEG's native 352x240 pixel size to the dimensions of the screen.

Prices for these boards have fallen under $250 lately, but there aren't many MPEG titles being sold. Besides the games and multimedia programs that come bundled with the boards, there's *Top Gun* and a few other movies from Paramount, lots of karaoke discs from the Japanese and Taiwanese markets, and not much else. Compatibility problems don't help. Despite the White Book VideoCD standard and MPEG's International Standards Organization-certified status, programs designed for one MPEG decoder still don't always play on a different brand of card.

But the main hangup for MPEG is the same song we've heard about every new gizmo that hooks up to or plugs into a PC. Why would you buy one if there are only two or three games that run on it? And why would developers write games for a device that hasn't sold very well? In computer industry jargon, it takes a "killer app" to break this stalemate, a program so awesome that you'll buy the board just to run it. It seems that MPEG hasn't found its killer app yet. And the clock is ticking.

Several other trends might keep MPEG from ever beating out software video in PC games: the continuing development of more efficient software compression schemes and more powerful CPU chips, constantly dropping CD-ROM manufacturing costs, and the coming High-Density Compact Disc standard that could store as much as 20 times more data on each disc. When you add all these together, there's more than a slight chance that MPEG might miss its window of opportunity.

Intel is best known as the leading manufacturer of CPU chips, but it's also been working hard on its Indeo video software, one of the best compression systems for software video. Indeo 4.1 is the latest edition, but this time there's more to it than better compression algorithms. Up until now, Indeo was simply a set of plug-in compressor/decompressor modules ("codecs") that worked with video systems like Microsoft's Video for Windows and Apple's QuickTime. But with the latest release, Indeo has become Indeo Video Interactive, a complete and independent video subsystem with innovative new features like real-time transparency, overlay, underlay, and on-the-fly contrast and brightness controls.

Most of the video-based games we've seen so far have run outside Windows, where standard systems like Video for Windows and QuickTime aren't an option. Developers have had to either develop their own video software or license a system directly. But as developers move to Windows 95, we'll no doubt be seeing more games that use either Video for Windows or the new stand-alone Indeo. This might be the first time that these two erstwhile allies have squared off in competition, and it'll be interesting to see which of the two titans wins the day.

But the biggest boost to software video might come from new hardware. With video cards like Diamond Multimedia's Stealth 64 Video, Hercules' Stingray Pro and Graphite Terminator cards and Matrox's MGA Millenium, the PC's CPU still takes care of actually decoding the video data stream. But accelerator hardware on the card performs a lot of simple, highly repetitive operations like calculating the final color of each pixel and rescaling each video frame to cover a larger area of the monitor screen.

Some of these cards also come with MPEG-playback software. The quality of these MPEG players has improved a lot, but even with a 100MHz Pentium and video acceleration hardware on hand, PCs still don't have the processing power it takes for solid, full-screen, full-speed MPEG video. Software decoding might eventually turn out to be MPEG's ticket to ride, but for now it's more an interesting toy than anything else.

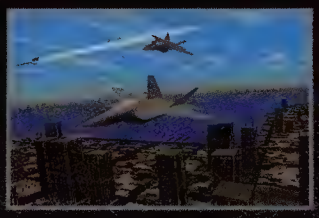
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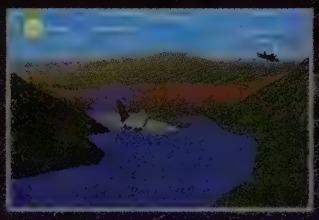
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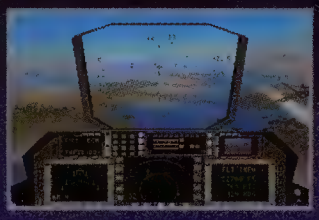


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The Strategy Central crew worked overtime this month trying to shoehorn all the hints and cheats you've been asking for into one easy-to-swallow capsule. It was a tight fit, but we've got some red-hot tips for some of the latest games, including *Prisoner of Ice*, *Tyrian*, *Creature Shock*, and Origin's killer shoot-'em-up, *Crusader: No Remorse*.

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Crusader: No Remorse

Here's how to keep your armor free of bullet-stains.

After fragging just a few consortium guards, the *PC Gamer* staff was quick to warm up to *Crusader*'s unique brand of action-packed bloodshed and adventure gaming. And after blasting our way through all of the levels, we've uncovered a few simple tips that can keep you from running into trouble later in the game — and help you survive some of the more dangerous regions of the consortium's complexes.



The familiar *Doom* technique of detonating a few radioactive barrels near an enemy works equally well in *Crusader*.

Save your money and ammo

With *Crusader*'s laundry list of exotic weaponry, you'll probably be tempted to upgrade your Silencer's wimpy standard-issue pistol right away and pick up some heavy-duty firepower from the black-market dealer back at the base. While upgrading is fine, our advice is to get the most mileage out of the abundant ammo that's available during the early levels (and save the really good stuff for tougher enemies). Your best bet is to stick to the standard issue pistol or the slightly more effective BA-41. Ammo for both of these weapons is plentiful (you'll find it on guards and soldiers, or in storage lockers), which means you won't have to waste those precious credits on reloads.

You can also save a huge chunk of money by searching storage lockers and storeroom shelves thoroughly for expensive hardware like the shotgun or grenade launcher (both are available in the first few levels).

Remember that your Silencer can only carry five weapons at a time, so you'll need to have a free space in your inventory to bring back the good stuff. Use the Ctrl+D key combination to drop your weapon back at the base (it'll be placed in a storage locker near the bar).

Situational firepower

Keeping ammo levels high for every weapon is a prime concern as you get closer to *Crusader*'s frantic conclusion, and choosing the right weapon for a given situation can help you manage this job a little easier. Certain weapons are better used as secondaries; for example, the shotgun's limited range and slow rate of fire means it works best in close-quarters combat against few targets. But that doesn't mean you won't get the chance to shuck a few shells every now and again. When approaching one of the consortium's many mined hallways or facing the crawling menace of the spider bombs, a few scattergun blasts are all it takes to clear a safe path.

With its limited supply of ammo, the grenade launcher is another weapon you'll want to use sparingly and only under certain circumstances. It's best for clearing a room or creating mass confusion, but it also has a not-so-secret second function as a universal door opener. If you can't find the key or panel that opens a locked door, try launching a few grenades at it.

As for the energy weapons, the top-of-the-line hardware is great for killing bad guys, but you'll have to contend with a few quirks. Their deadly energy can bounce off of shiny objects, creating a major threat to your Silencer; on top of that, these weapons typically burn their victims to a cinder, leaving you no body to search for ammo or credits.



Can't find the keys to get in certain rooms? If your Silencer is equipped with the grenade launcher, you'll find it doubles as a handy-dandy door opener.

Turrets

After your first encounter with these automated cannons, you'll soon realize they can be a Silencer's worst nightmare. While you *can* sling enough lead to shut 'em down, you'll waste a lot of ammo in the process. It's better to silence these guns with just one or two well-directed spider bombs.

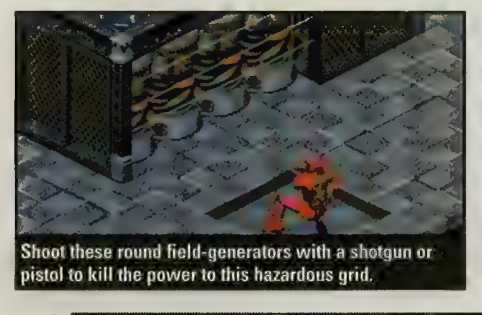
Power grids

Ever on the lookout for new ways to deal with the rebel threat, consortium scientists developed a limited network of electrified floor panels for key areas of their complexes. Powered by large generators, these panels deliver a painful jolt to anyone who dares cross them. But there's a fatal flaw in their design: the generators are often within plain view of

continued on pg. 312...

continued from pg. 311...

the grid — destroy them, and you take down the grid. You can identify the generators by their slim cylindrical design. Shoot 'em with your weapon of choice or send a few spider bombs to take care of them.



Shoot these round field-generators with a shotgun or pistol to kill the power to this hazardous grid.

Electric eyes

If you've stepped through a doorway and found yourself trapped by laser beams or pummeled by proton blasts, you've probably triggered one of the consortium's most common security devices, the electronic eye.

These small, almost unnoticeable, sensors pick up the slightest movement and are placed seemingly at random along many consortium hallways. Early detection and destruction is the key to avoiding catastrophe. You need to look for a slim silver oval with a red inset and blast away.

Escaping the nerve gas

This is a tip for one of *Crusader*'s toughest missions, a raid to destroy the consortium nerve gas production facility. After setting the explosives, you'll have a limited amount of time before the plant goes up in a mushroom cloud, so you'll need to know the way out to the proper jump pad. Our advice is to practice the escape route before planting the bomb, to make sure you can run (and you'll *need* to run) back to your original jump-in point. The time limit is pretty harsh on this one, so be prepared to die a couple of times.

Prisoner of Ice

We've got the best way to defrost Cthulhu's minions!

If you're one of the many who've become hypnotized by I•Motion's supernatural thriller *Prisoner of Ice*, you've probably encountered a few of the frustrating timed puzzles that seem to pop up throughout the game. The strategy crew puzzled their way through the toughest of these and has come up with some solutions to get you back on track.

HMS Victoria, part 1

To destroy the creature lurking in the Victoria's hold, you'll need to gain a little supernatural firepower from Hamsum. Pick up the St. Christopher's medal and use it to hypnotize Hamsum. Use the tape recorder to capture Hamsum's Cthulhu rant. Now return to the bridge, where you'll find that the Prisoner has escaped from the Victoria's hold. To defeat the monster and save the sub, select the tape recorder and use it on Ryan — he'll repeat the Cthulhu chant, which will destroy the creature.

HMS Victoria, part 2

Once you've discovered the missing personnel files at the British base, Sears will instruct you to search the Victoria for Hamsum's belongings. Finding his belongings is easy enough, but escaping the sub is a little tricky. To destroy the beast on the Victoria, you'll need to enable the sub's self-destruct code. When the beast arrives, use the key you got from Sears' safe to unlock the self-destruct code. Head for the hatch as soon as you've activated the destruct sequence (you'll need to be quick, or the Prisoner will get you.)



You must listen carefully to your cell mates in order to escape the jail cell. Just don't get caught by the guards.

The stone! The stone!

After returning from the Victoria, you'll find that Hamsum has become possessed by one of the Prisoners who is preparing to unleash his fury on the base. The dying words of Sears reveal that there is a stone behind the map in his office, but how in the world are you supposed to get it? Go to the Infirmary and look on the doctor's desk. You should find a needle there. Now go to Sears' office and look at the map. Hmm, something's different; there's a red dot that you didn't notice before. Use the needle on the dot to reveal a secret panel behind the map. Here you'll find the stone to destroy the creature and a few items to help you later in the game.



a needle

A needle! Just the sort of thin instrument you'll need to activate the pinhole release for the map in Sears' office.

Escape from the jail

The trick to escaping the jail is to remain calm, and talk to the man in the cell next to you by scratching on the wall with the spoon. Be careful to avoid the prying eyes of the guards as you do this, or you'll be taken away and shot.

Wait until all the other prisoners have been taken away, and you'll be ordered to sign a confession by Dietrich. When Dietrich leaves, pick up the stool and use the piece of paper in the sink to clog the drain. Move the table in front of the door. When the water seeps out under the door a guard will come. Use the stool on the guard to knock him out. Close the door, then take the guard's keys. Now use the stool on the table (that'll be the last time you have to handle a stool) to create a platform so you can reach the ventilation grid in the ceiling, and use the spoon to unscrew the grate. Your escape procedure is now complete.

The mine door

After Ryan teleports to a mine filled with ice-encased Prisoners, it seems there's no way out. The crowbar isn't enough to free the mine cart and there's no convenient pool of lava to heat it up. Check the around the rocks near the left side of the screen, and look for a loose rock. Use the crowbar to move the rock and release some lava. Use the prybar in the lava to heat it up, then melt the ice that's keeping the mine cart from moving. Push the cart to open the door. Be sure and exit this room quickly, or the heat from the lava will release one of the Prisoners trapped in ice.



a stone

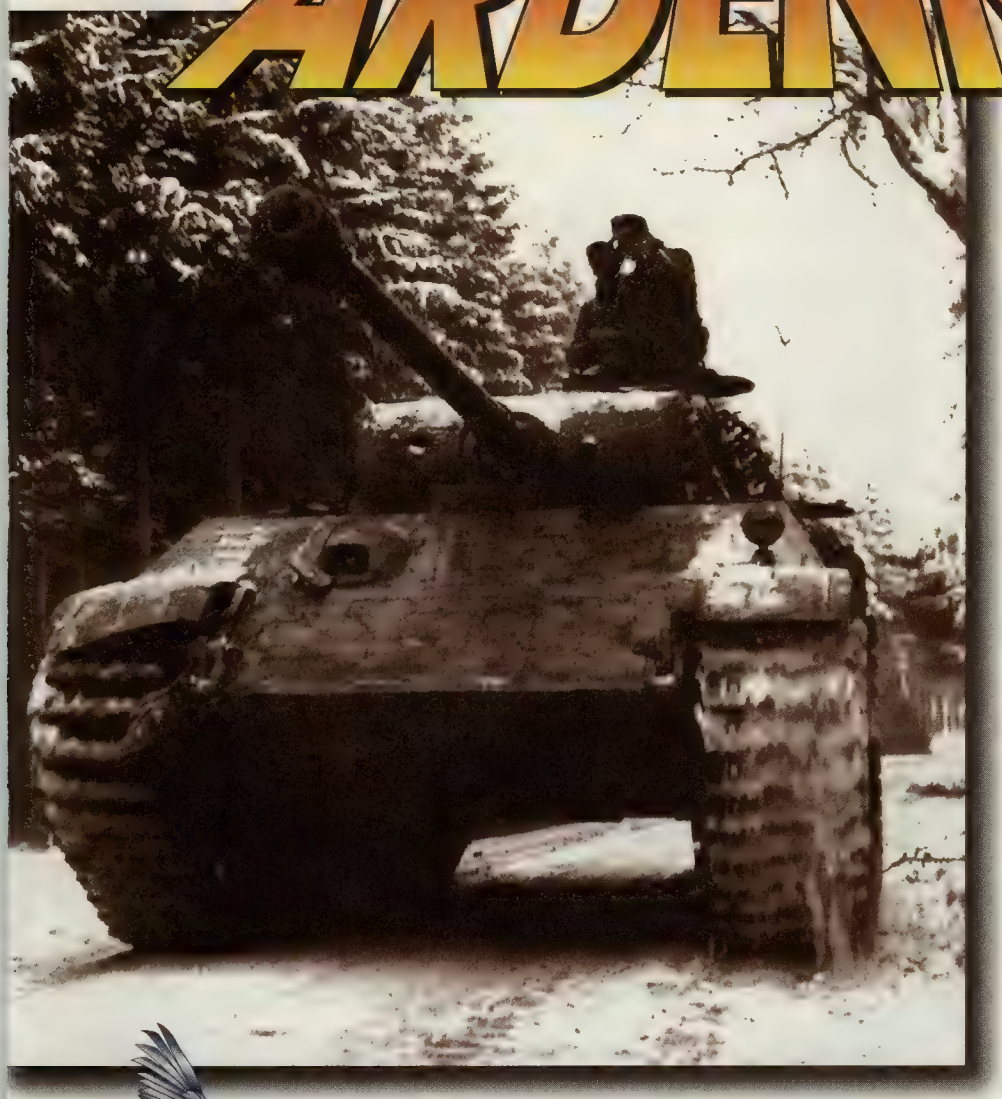
Pry the rock near the rockslide to release a stream of lava. You'll be able to heat the prybar to melt the ice around the mine carts' wheel.

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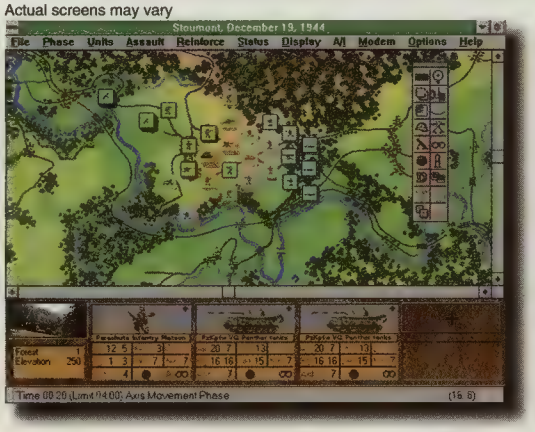
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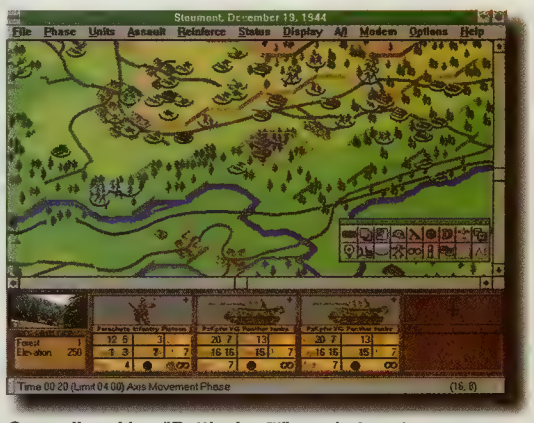
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Product Information Number 241

Tyrian

Food fights, mini-games, and cheats galore!

If you caught our review of Epic MegaGame's fast-flying *Tyrian*, you already know that it lives up to the company's reputation for creating highly entertaining arcade games like *One Must Fall: 2097*, *Jazz Jackrabbit*, and *Epic Pinball*. It's quickly become a staff favorite — during those down-times between deadlines, of course. But since we found these cheats, which add some extra-special surprises to the *Tyrian* game experience, the percentage of our workday lost to the game has risen significantly.

If you've completed an entire episode of the game, you've probably already encountered a few of these codes, but in case you haven't managed to beat those big bosses, here are a few we've been able to come up with...



Using one of *Tyrian*'s special cheats, you'll be able to fly as a vegetarian's worst nightmare in the aptly named the Carrot Food Fighter.

To access the following cheats, type these codes at Tyrian's main menu screen:

Enemy — Fly an enemy U-Fighter
Stealth — Fly a Ninja Fighter
Stormwind — The Elemental Fighter
Techno — Experimental Fighter
Unknown — TX Silvercloud
Weird — Fly as a Carrot Food Fighter armed with banana guns
Destruct — Gives you the chance to play *Tyrian*'s built-in mini-game

- To become invincible, press the **F2**, **F3**, and **F6** keys all at once while you're playing the game.



Type Destruct at the main menu to be able to play this mini-game hidden within *Tyrian*.

- To skip to the next level, press **F2**, **F6**, and **F7** at the same time.
- To get into super turbo mode, press the **Backspace** key and **1**.
- To set the difficulty mode to impossible, type **G** in uppercase.



The Experimental Fighter is bristling with more than enough firepower to bring down just about anything they'll throw at you.



Reader's Request

Day of the Tentacle

Eeewww! This answer has chunks in it!

Dear Strategy Central,

Help! I've been playing LucasArts' *Day of the Tentacle* for a couple of weeks now and I've become hopelessly stuck. When playing as Laverne, I can't seem to find the final item I need to turn the mummy of Ted Edison into a prize-winning human. I've entered him in the contest and used the spaghetti and fork to create the hair, used the horse's teeth from Hoagie's time-line to make a smile, and figured out that I needed the laughing box out of the punching bag clown for personality, but I can't figure out what to do to get rid of the competition. Please help, this game is driving me crazy!

Shelli Davis
Pittsburg, PA

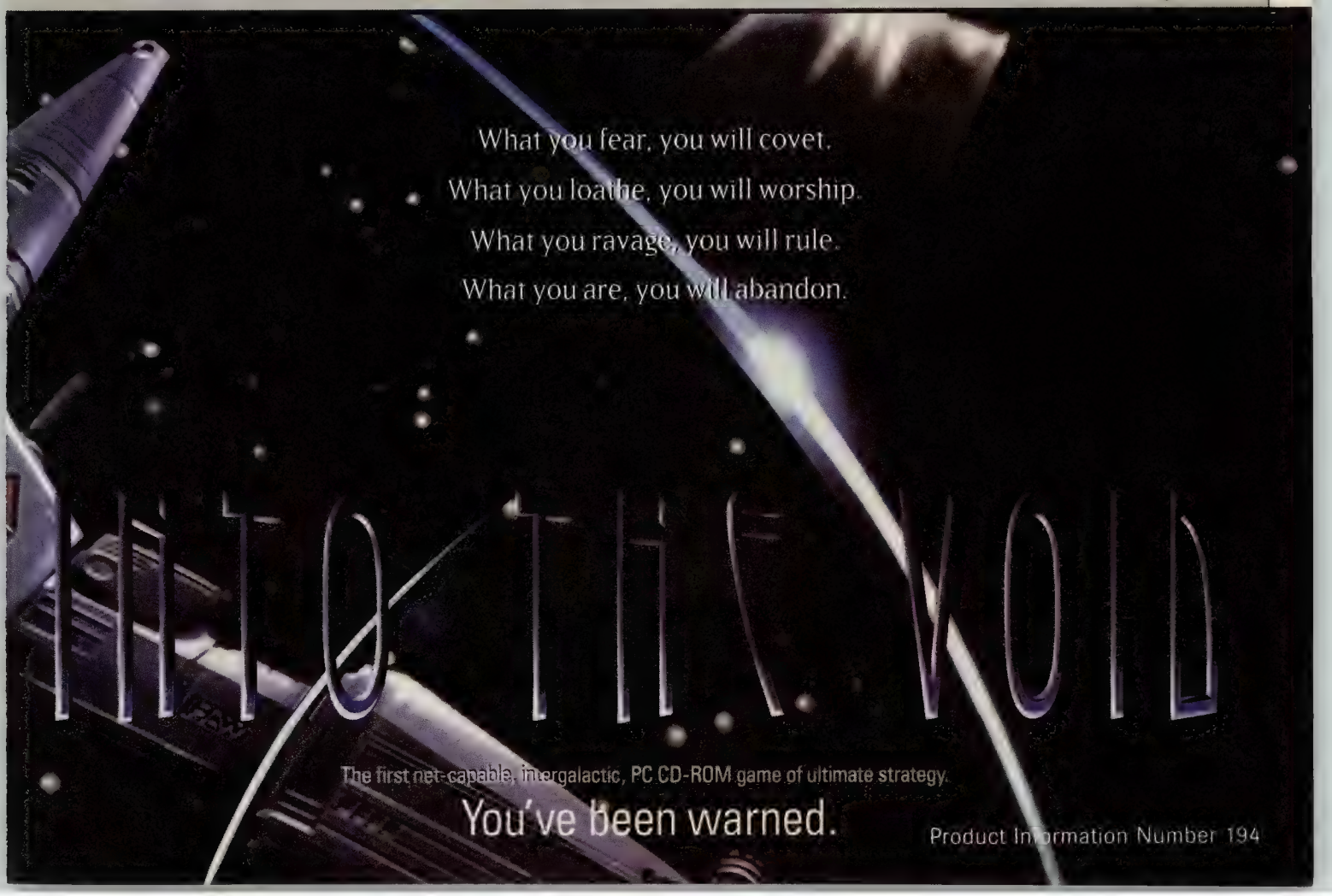


To shake loose the fake barf, place the speakers face down on Green Tentacle's floor, then crank the music...



...Then head to the lobby to collect your prize!

The answer isn't that hard to get, but it is pretty hard to spot. First, you'll need to select Bernard and go to Green Tentacle's room on the second floor of the mansion. Green's a pretty happening dude with a rocking sound system that looks like it's loud enough to shake out a few clues. Turn on the radio, and you'll notice that something dislodges from the ceiling in the lobby of the mansion. Push the speaker over so it's facing the floor and turn the radio on again; this will cause the object to shake loose. Have Bernard go downstairs and pick up the item and you'll see it's everybody's favorite, that standard-issue comedy staple — Fake Barf. Use the chrono-john to send the gag-gak to Laverne, and put the vomit near or on Harold (he's the smug human contestant) and the Tentacle judges should disqualify him. Now that you've got the competition out of the way, Ted should get first prize in the human contest (just be sure and turn on the laughing box when the judges tell a joke).



Reader's Requests

Blackthorne and Creature Shock

No, really! The dog ate my passcodes!

Dear Strategy Central,

Okay, I know this is going to sound a little improbable, and you're probably going to think I'm making this up, but after I completed Interplay's action/shooter *Blackthorne* and carefully jotted down all the passcodes to the different levels, Mindy, my usually faithful and mild-mannered German Shepherd, gobbled up the sheet of paper that I had written the codes on (she gnawed on my Windows 3.1 manual too, but apparently didn't like the taste). Would it be too much to ask if you could print the passcodes for *Blackthorne*, so I can get on with my life and have a little fun blowing up Whar'orks again?

David Burns
via AOL

P.S. I recently heard that Interplay made a patch for *Blackthorne* that allows you to use a joystick rather than the keyboard. Have you ever put this patch on any of your CDs? Even though I've beaten the game using the keyboard, I'd much rather use a joystick.

David, you're right. Your story does sound pretty implausible, and normally we'd recommend that you wait until the pass codes... err, you know, pass. (it's not like you won't get them back!). But we all have a soft spot for lovable mutts and goofy letters, so we're going to fulfill your request and reveal all the passcodes for Blackthorne.

And yes, Interplay does have a joystick patch for Blackthorne, *and it's available at Interplay's product support forums on both AOL and CompuServe (you'll also be able to find it in many game forums as well). We've also included the patch on this month's CD in the bug patch directory.*

LEVEL 2	FBWC
LEVEL 3	QP7R
LEVEL 4	WJTV
LEVEL 5	RRYB
LEVEL 6	ZS9P
LEVEL 7	XJSN
LEVEL 8	CGDM
LEVEL 9	TJIF
LEVEL 10	GSG3
LEVEL 11	BMHS
LEVEL 12	Y4DJ
LEVEL 13	HCKD
LEVEL 14	NRLF
LEVEL 15	J6BZ
LEVEL 16	MJXG
LEVEL 17	K3CH

Installing the Patch

To enable the joystick patch for *Blackthorne*, copy the BT.EXE file from the \PATCHES directory on this months CD to the *Blackthorne* directory. Then type BT.EXE to start.



If you've never finished Interplay's excellent action shooter *Blackthorne*, we've got the passcodes that will let you warp to any level — including the final confrontation with your nemesis Sarlac.

Visit all the pretty critters, without having to fight your way through!

Dear Strategy Central,

After rereading some of my *PC Gamer* back issues, I ran across your review of Virgin's sci-fi shooter *Creature Shock*. Once I saw the amazing pictures and read the review, I was prompted to run out and buy a copy (I'm a sucker for pretty arcade games). Needless to say, the graphics are everything you promised and more, and now I'm hopelessly addicted. But I'm also hopelessly stuck on the third or fourth level. I was wondering if you've run across any cheats for Virgin's *Creature Shock* that'll give me better weapons, health, shields, etc. to help me get through the game.



With the patch found on this month's CD you can skip to your choice of any of the creature-laden levels in Virgin's *Creature Shock*.

Hank Perry
via AOL

Thanks for writing Hank. Unfortunately, we don't know of any command-line cheats for Creature Shock *that'll do what you ask, (we tried real hard to find some, honest), but after talking to our friends at Virgin, we did come up with a reasonable solution to your dilemma. Virgin has released a file for* Creature Shock *called CREATUR.SET that allows you to skip to any level you want, without having to fight your way through it inch-by-inch. We've included the file on this month's CD — it can be found in the bug patch directory. Just copy the file to the game directory and you'll be all set. If you're not a subscriber to our CD, there are still a couple of ways that you can lay your hands on the file. You can download the file from Virgin's BBS at (714) 833-3305 or find the file located in many of the game forums on the major online services.*

Installing the Patch

To install the level-skip patch for *Creature Shock*, simply copy the file CREATUR.SET from the /PATCHES directory on this month's CD to the game's directory on your hard drive. To run the game with the patch, simply start the game in the usual manner.

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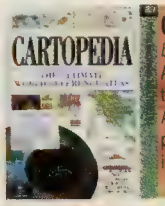




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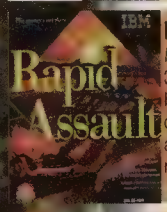
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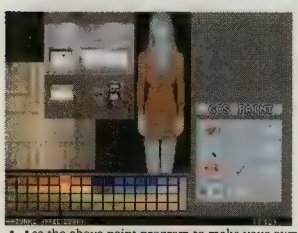
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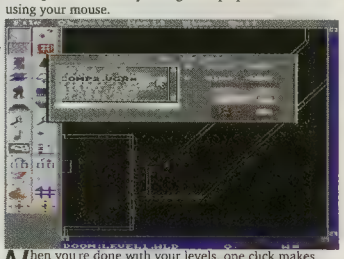
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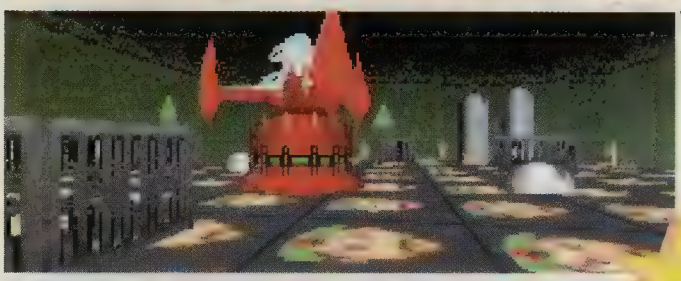
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LETTERS

As your hands tremble under the ponderous weight of this edition of *PCG*, you're probably wondering how we managed to hang onto our sanity while putting together our biggest issue ever. It all comes down to you, gentle readers; when the stress became too much, we dipped our hands into the mailbag, and our spirits soared....

Let's Hear From You!

Write to:

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or E-mail to:

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Virtual Strumming

Dear PCG,
In need of something new and different for my PC, I have found the Virtual Guitar. I know that it came out a while ago, and it looked cool then, as it does now, except that now it's a lot cheaper! I talked to a friend who tried it out, and he said that it was fun, but that there's only one CD (the Aerosmith one) available for it. I was wondering if you had any info about other games for the Virtual Guitar for all those interested gamers out there who wanna rock, but just can't seem to do it on a real guitar.

Thanks,
Howard Wolosky
Parsippany, NJ

Strange, but true: no less than IBM has picked up the Virtual Guitar. They've redesigned it as — get this — a virtual guitar pick. *The good news is that, in the smaller, less expensive package (and with IBM backing it up), the product has a much better chance of catching on. Right now, there are no other titles than the one you've got, but IBM plans to produce more if the Virtual Pick does well.*

Wargaming Pros and Cons

Dear PC Gamer,
I gotta question about yer reviews. In the little part in each issue where you give us the breakdown of what the percentages mean (i.e. 100-90 percent means such-and-such, 89-80 percent means so-and-so, etc.), you point out the following: Scores between 90-100 percent signify a game that would be enjoyable to "anyone interested in PC gaming." And scores between 80-89 percent might signify a truly groundbreaking game that would appeal only to a specialized audience.

Why, then, have *two* wargames been given a 90+ rating lately? *Perfect General II* got a 91 percent and *D-Day: America Invades* got a 95 percent!

Understand that I'm *not* saying



Are wargames for everyone? Maybe not, but good gaming is good gaming, and *D-Day* is one of the best you'll find.

"Wargames suck and only dweebs play them." But a 95 percent rating suggests that *D-Day* is a game of such towering magnitude that nearly everyone will enjoy it. And I just don't know too many people who like games of grand strategy played out on a hexagonal grid. (In fact, I only know of three people like this, and none of them owns a computer. Compare this to the two dozen or so people I know that love RPGs. And the four dozen or so people I know that love *Doom/Descent*-type games.)

So I guess my question is: Don't wargames fall into the category of "decidedly specialist taste?" And if so, shouldn't someone go and restrain a little bit of Bill Trotter's (understandable) enthusiasm for the genre? (I mean, after all, I think Blue Öyster Cult is the greatest band of all time, but I also realize that I'm in a *very* small minority.)

Sincerely,
C.C. Rosenthal
aka Rosie
via AOL

Fair question, Rosie. But our ratings system is intended as a guideline for readers, not as a set of hard-and-fast rules. We don't want to limit our reviewers to a certain range of ratings; if a wargame is really *good (like* PGII *and* D-Day*), it'd be silly to arbitrarily say it can't score higher than 89 percent just because it's a wargame. And don't be too quick to dismiss a game that doesn't immediately grab you. A lot of people thought* SimCity *and* Civilization *sounded boring, but they gave those classics a shot because of the great reviews and awards they received — and the rest is history.*

Dear PC Gamer,
I am a *huge* wargame buff. Most of my experience is with board games, although I love computer games too. The nice thing about playing a "board game" on a computer is that your don't need an opponent — the computer is always your adversary.

Another wonderful thing about playing on the computer is the ability of the computer to add the element of warfare known as "the fog of war." When you play a board game, you can see all the pieces, and you know where everything is. In reality, you might not know there's an enemy squad waiting in ambush for you over the next hill. This element adds a higher level of tactical and strategic thinking when planning your moves.

I was hoping you could help me locate more wargames similar to *V for Victory* and *Stalingrad*. Any suggestions that you have would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Eric Naughton
Washington, D.C.

Funny you should ask, Eric. In addition to Stalingrad *and the* V for Victory *games, Atomic Games has developed* D-Day: America Invades, *which (as you can see from Rosie's letter above) earned a 95 percent rating. Check out this month's Desktop General column for a little more about what Atomic is up to these days.*

Siskel & E-Mail

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Computer roleplaying may be on its last legs, but a few excellent new titles — including Bethesda's *Daggerfall* — should revive it.

ing. However, I have yet to witness any proof that the film-making community has realized exactly what is going on in computer entertainment. Software developers, like kids in a candy store, find themselves so thrilled with the new technology that they don't realize that they have no idea how to direct an actor or where to place the camera.

Take *Under A Killing Moon*, for example. I realize I'm in the minority, but I found this game truly laughable. If you went to the movies and saw nothing but wide shots stuck at ninety degree angles around the room, you'd demand your money back.

Chris Roberts directed *Wing Commander III* with considerably more attention to shot design and pacing. *WC3*, while not perfect, hints at the possibilities for gaming's future.

The bottom line is that until Hollywood film-making talent (not just Hollywood money) becomes part of the creative process in game development, we'll be stuck with games directed by techno-heads instead of film-makers. It's not enough to have a couple of stars in front of the camera, we need film-making talent behind the camera as well.

Sincerely,
Rob Morton
via AOL

We agree, Rob — but only up to a point. The live-action sequences in most of today's games leave a lot to be desired. They're plagued by poor directing and just plain bad acting, and they could definitely use an infusion of film-trained talent. But we shudder to think what PC gaming would be like if Hollywood really took over the industry. Film and games are two extremely different things, and that's exactly how it should be — the more you do to make a game feel like a movie, the less like a game it will be. That's the lesson that really needs to be learned here.

R.I.P. RPGs?

Dear PC Gamer,
While reading Trent C. Ward's article "The RPG Wars Rage On" in your October '95 issue, I was pleased to note that he mentioned my favorite RPG: *Phantasy Star*, on the old Sega 8-bit system. It had a great story, was challenging but not impossible, and had a great ending. None of the RPGs on the 16-bit Genesis even came close to the quality of that game.

Because of this, I turned to PC-based RPGs hoping to find the quality that *Phantasy Star* had. I bought *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* and *Ultima Underworld* for $9 each — wow, what a bargain! Here were equals to *Phantasy Star*. As for the newer games, they just don't have that magic that transports you into another world. Oh sure, *Elder Scrolls*, *Betrayal at Krondor*, and *Dungeon Master II* are decent RPGs, but not great ones.

Are RPGs dead? I think so. I don't think we'll see something like *Phantasy Star* again. I saw it all happen before in the Sega and Nintendo scenario. Let's just hope that there are still some dedicated RPG producers who are still willing to make a great RPG, not one that's all glitz and fluff.

Your Sincerely,
David Mayrs
North Vancouver, B.C., Canada

As a matter of fact, there are some very dedicated RPG producers in the industry. As you read this, you're probably seeing the latest fruits of their labor: Bethesda Softworks' second Elder Scrolls game, Daggerfall, *is in the works as we go to press, and so is an enhanced version of* Crusaders. *Roleplaying is not dead; it may be coming out of an extended illness, but we think RPGs are on their way back in a big way.*

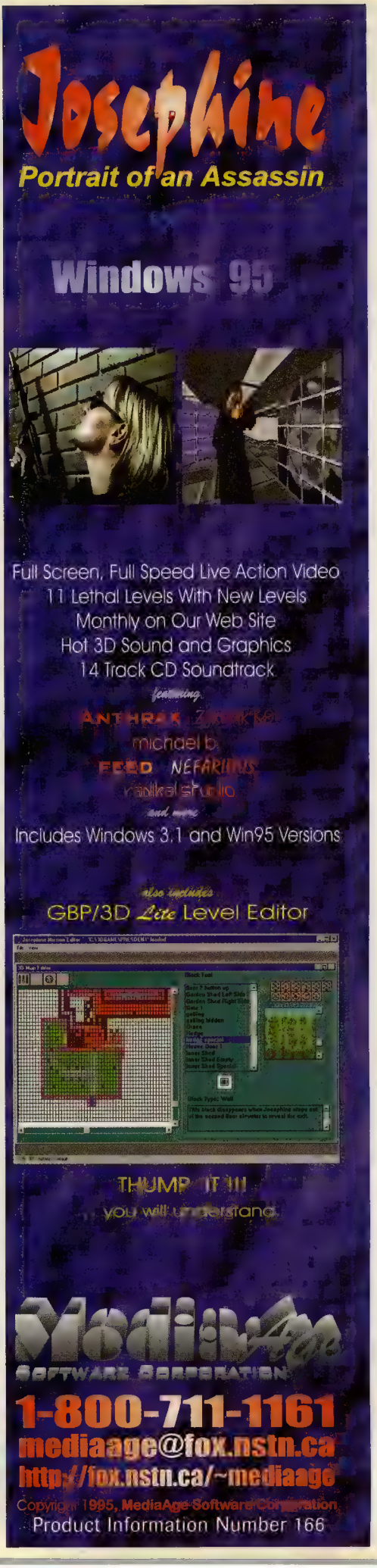
Where Are the Colors?

Dear PC Gamer,
For what seems like years now, PC video hardware has outgrown good old VGA, with its 256 (8-bit) colors. Why is it that virtually no PC game software takes advantage of today's wider range of colors? It stands to reason that using more colors (such as "hi-color" 16-bit mode) would result in a tremendous leap in graphic smoothness and subtlety. Further, games have been directly supporting specific chipsets (e.g., Tseng Labs, S3, etc.) for as long as I can remember, and very fast processors are quickly becoming commonplace. Why the adherence to 8-bit color?

Regards,
Neville Chen
via AOL

That's a simple one. PC games don't use greater than 8-bit color because it takes so much more horsepower to manipulate 16- and 24-bit images. Sure, Mechwarrior 2 *would look even more incredible in 65,000 or 16 million colors, but the latest, hottest chip Intel makes might not be powerful enough keep those 'mechs moving smoothly. Look for "hi-color" and "true-color" games in a few years, when really powerful processors are commonplace.*

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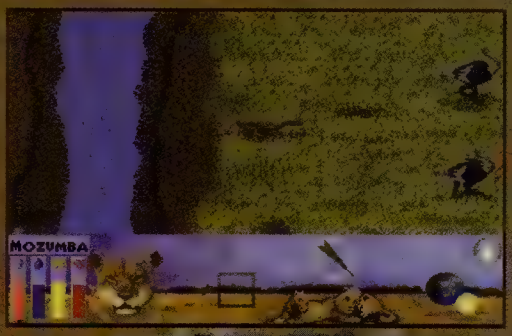
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Of course, you may want to study up on *Panthera leo* before you try to step into its paws. That's why we're joining forces with Sanctuary Woods to take one lucky gamer and a friend to Marine World Africa USA for a close-up look at these beautiful animals — not to mention a whole menagerie of their royal subjects. But wait — that's not all! Here's how the prizes shake down:



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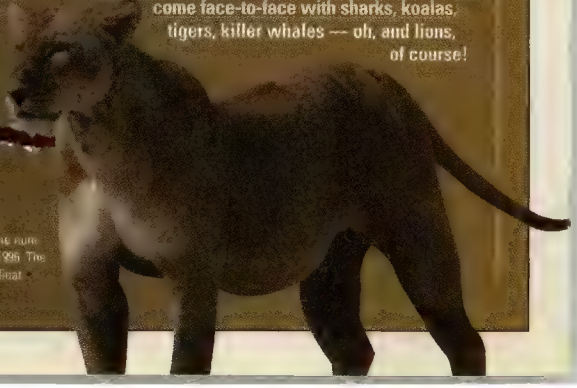
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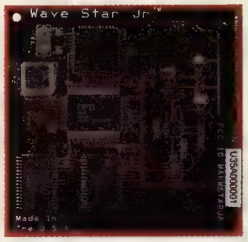
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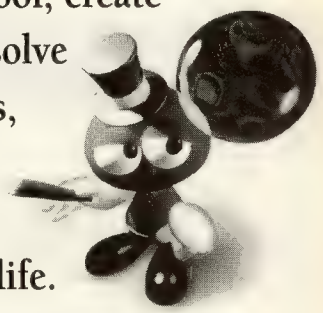
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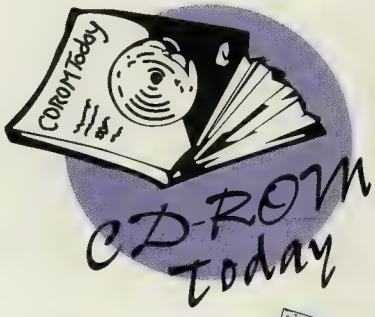
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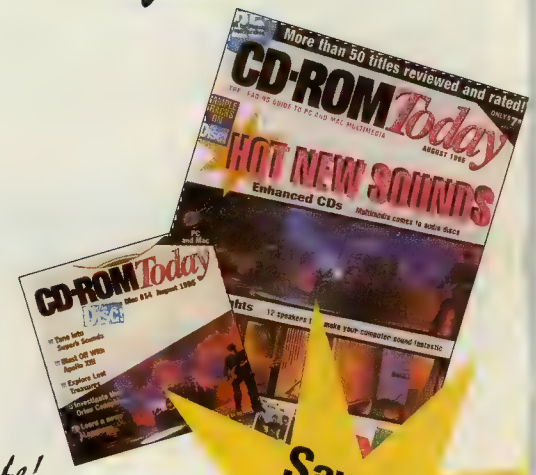
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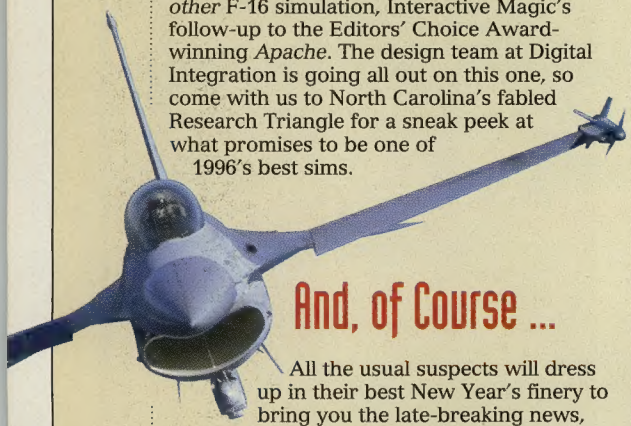
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We'll also bring you the inside story on the *other* F-16 simulation, Interactive Magic's follow-up to the Editors' Choice Award-winning *Apache*. The design team at Digital Integration is going all out on this one, so come with us to North Carolina's fabled Research Triangle for a sneak peek at what promises to be one of 1996's best sims.



And, of Course ...

All the usual suspects will dress up in their best New Year's finery to bring you the late-breaking news, in-depth game previews, and insightful columns you've come to expect from your friends at *PC Gamer*. Everything we do is for you, folks, so give our meager existences some meaning by meeting us here in 30 days!

Reviews



3D Lemmings from Psygnosis

Abuse
Entomorph
EF2000
3D Lemmings
SimIsle
Battleground Ardennes
Millennia: Altered Destinies



Take 2's *Millennia: Altered Destinies*

Supreme Warriors
Bad Mojo

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Stearns should've been used to it by now. The North African desert heat, the stinging wind-blown sand, the blinding sun — it was all just another day at the office.

So why was he so uneasy? What made this mission any different from all the others?

He glanced at the GPS readout on his Company-issue wrist communicator. Unless the satellites were wrong for the first time in history, the terrorist camp was just over the next dune.

Still no sign of trouble, but the hair on Stearns' neck stood straight up as he checked his weapons. The silenced 9 mm Beretta, the little CAR-15 on its shoulder strap, the flash-bang grenades — they were all right where they belonged. But most important was the spoon.

The grapefruit spoon.

Stearns calmed as he reached into his flak jacket and found the spoon. He ran his thumb along its smooth bowl, felt the rough teeth at its tip. It was his trademark.

When the terrorist leaders found another handful of their soldiers lying pale and quiet, their hearts removed by a blunt instrument, they would know Stearns was back.

And they would be afraid.

TO BE CONTINUED...

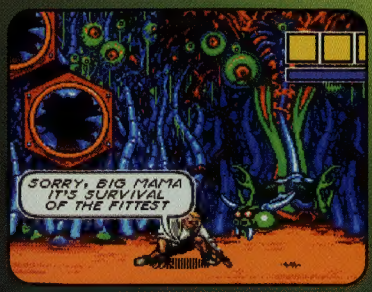
FASTER. SMOOTHER.

BETTER. FUNNER.*



Whether you choose **ECCO THE DOLPHIN, COMIX ZONE, TOMCAT ALLEY** or all three, you can't lose! Because Sega has enhanced these hit games specifically for today's faster PC processors.

Think of it. The speed and quick-response action you love about Sega together with the graphic sophistication of PC software. What could be funner*?



COMIX ZONE now features lightning-quick arcade-style action, instant installation for instant fighting, as well as great graphics drawn by real comic book artists!



ECCO THE DOLPHIN now offers higher resolution graphics, expanded difficulty levels, added video segments and multiple control modes.



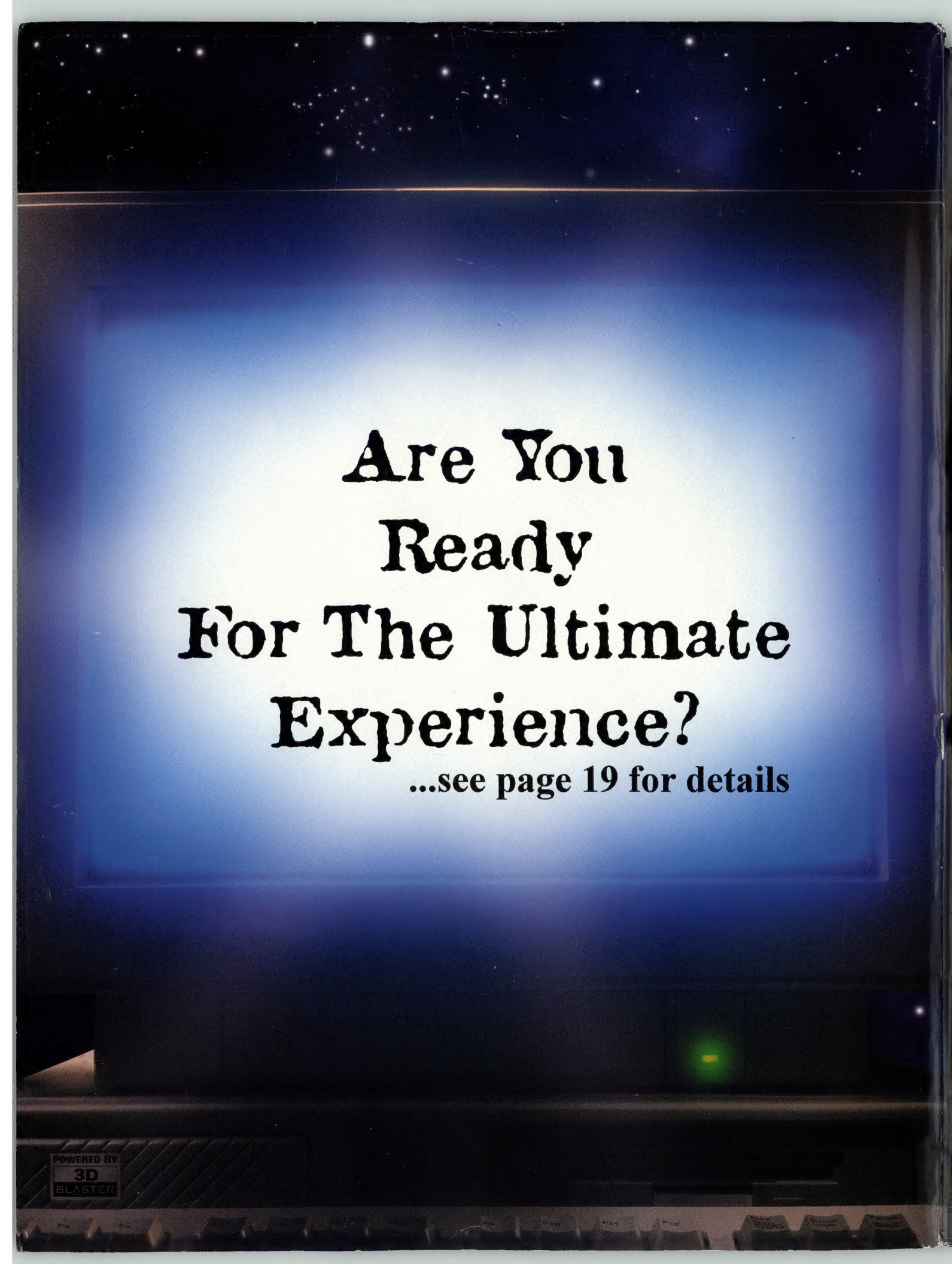
TOMCAT ALLEY has a higher video frame rate (20 frames per second), over an hour of near-VHS quality video, plus full-screen video. And, it's joystick-controllable!

*Yeah, we know "funner" isn't really a word. And "Ecco" and "Comix" aren't spelled that way. But who asked you anyway?

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SEGA® PC

Product Information Number 206



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